

THE
DEAD-WATCHERS,
AND OTHER
FOLK-LORE TALES
OF

WESTMEATH

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“There is but one
Love-story in this withered world, forsooth;
And it is brief, and ends, where it began
(What if I tell, in play, the dreary truth?)
With something we call youth.”

Mrs FLATT

MULLINGAR:

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P R E F A C E .

A great English writer has observed that a preface to a small book is almost as misplaced as a large porch to a small house ; but though this may be considered a small book, it yet demands some introductory sentences. The tale which gives its title to the volume was—as is hinted at in its closing paragraph—in great part transmitted to the writer of these pages by the eccentric poet and recluse of Coralstown, the late John Kelly, but necessarily it has received a certain amount of elaboration, and some cognate local traditions have been incorporated with it. [I can vouch for the authenticity of the main incidents ; the graveyard is in the vicinity of Kinnegad, but the time of the tragic occurrence is ante-dated by quarter of a century.]

The study of folk lore has of late received a great deal of attention from learned enquirers ; and though the Irish branch of this interesting subject has not been neglected, it must be regretfully admitted that its study has not been pursued with such ardour as has been expended on that of other countries less rich in legendary lore than is the land of the Gael. The folk lore societies of various European countries, with their bulky quarterly or annual volumes, attest this fact. For these reasons, and for others that might be easily adduced, I venture to consider that no contribution to this department of literature, however humble, ought to be ignored. I, therefore, express the hope that the quaint traditions given in this volume may be received with intelligent appreciation solely for their value as fragments of

“ The old weird world that sleeps in Irish lore.”

In appendix A, will be found explanatory notes to the various tales, and these notes I have endeavoured to render as interesting as the limited space at my disposal would admit of.

Regarding the portion of the work (appendix B) dealing with apparitions, I wish to assure my readers that I have fully satisfied myself of the trustworthiness of the various documents there presented.

With these brief remarks, I leave the little work to its fate.

P.B.

*Coralstown, Co. Westmeath
Christmas, 1890.*

THE DEAD-WATCHERS ; A WEIRD TALE OF WESTMEATH,

PART I.

INTRODUCTION:

On a cold stormy Christmas Eve towards the close of the last century, a small funeral party entered the rural churchyard of G——, and hastily deposited the remains of a defunct fellow-mortal in a shallow grave beneath a time-worn, unlettered tombstone. As the "kindred clay" of past generations fell with a dull, heavy thud upon the coffin-lid, a few old crones joined their voices in a mournful *caoine* which ceased not till the gravediggers, having performed their sad offices, knelt beside the newly-raised mound to offer up the final prayers for the dead. The evident signs of an impending rain-storm and the near approach of night soon caused a rapid dispersion of the crowd, until at last only two individuals might be observed loitering behind in that "hallowed garden of the dead."

Though both these men appeared to have attained the same age, that is between sixty and seventy years, in other respects they presented a marked contrast. One was below the middle stature, thinspare in body, with lithe, active limbs that had lost little of the buoyancy of youth. His pallid countenance, together with the peculiar cleanliness of his attire showed plainly that he followed a sedentary occupation. The other was a large, burly man, with a stronger and certainly more healthy cast of countenance. His step was slow and infirm, and more than once he was obliged to lean upon his companion's shoulder to keep himself from falling.

As they groped their way in the dim twilight amongst the grey crosses and drooping headstones that bent like mourning ghosts above the quiet dead, who, happy or miserable, lay huddled together in one common mass, the larger man halted suddenly.

"*Dher a lavh!*" he exclaimed with a start, drawing back a pace or two, "there it is before us, Shaun!"

"*It!* In God's name what do you see, Meehaul?" demanded his companion in the vernacular, as he peered around the gloomy enclosure.

"The spectre of the Churchyard: there, it is gone!" and the old man devoutly blessed himself three times.

"Hear ye guard us this night, Meehaul! It always appears

God avert, I pray. But look!" he added in a cheerier tone, "there is a fire in the watch-house, so let us get inside and see who is there, for after all you may be mistaken as to what you have seen."

"I could not mistake, Shawn Kenny, so do not test me further, for I would like to banish it from my mind."

Meehaul Ryan wiped a cold, clammy sweat from his brow, and grasped his companion's arm still tighter as they proceeded in silence to a rudely-covered shed that stood in a retired corner of the burial ground. As they approached the spacious doorway they could observe an old man—a stranger—bending over a blazing pile of half-rotten coffin boards that were heaped upon the damp earthen floor, but his appearance and dress convinced them he was an humble peasant like themselves. Both men entered together and the customary salutation, "God save all here," broke almost simultaneously from their lips. The stranger, as he returned their greeting, shaded his eyes with his open hands, and cast a long, searching glance upon the intruders, who, however, appeared to feel no way abashed at the scrutiny. At length, turning to Kenny, he observed:

"I think I know your face, good honest man—are not you Kenny, the weaver of many a flimsy web?"

"You have guessed my name aright," replied the individual addressed, "and if I mistake not, I am standing in the presence of one Kerin Duffy, of Clonmore?"

"Right you are," said the stranger, knitting his shaggy eyebrows and clenching his broad hands—"right you are, I say, but the recognition would have cost you dearly were it not that this is Christmas Eve, a time of peace! Remember how you scoffed at our party, and ridiculed them in your worthless rhymes."

"You allude to events that should be forgotten by every true Irishman," rejoined the weaver somewhat warmly. "Faction fighting has been the bane of this country, and what honest man has ever profited by such dissensions?"

"True—true, by heaven!" exclaimed Duffy, suddenly relaxing his stern look, and allowing his hands to fall listlessly by his side; "we are both old men and should have buried our feuds in the grave of our youth, but some strange feeling which I cannot account for has disturbed my mind and my temper, this blessed evening."

"A truce with such foolish bickering then," interposed Meehaul Ryan, as he seated himself on a broad log of timber that lay against the end wall of the shed; "here, I have got a drop of 'usquebagh' that is strong enough to drown all our quarrels, so let us try its flavour and talk of something else."

The trio proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as their

being introduced when a low moan from the opposite end of the shed arrested their attention.

"What unearthly sound is that?" queried Meehaul, as he staggered to his feet and glanced towards the door. Duffy also left his seat, and snatching a brand from the smouldering embers held it above his head. "Do not be alarmed," he said, a grim smile lighting up his worn features for a moment, "you see it is only a weary mortal like ourselves.

His companions directed their gaze to a corner of the shed where, extended upon a rough plank, they saw the outlines of a dark-visaged young man apparently wrapped in heavy slumber. His hands were locked upon his breast, and beneath his right arm the barrel of a short gun glistened in the torchlight. "He can do us no injury, at all events," remarked Duffy, as he threw the flaming brand into the fire and resumed his seat. "It is well to have his stout arm to aid us in case we are surprised, for I surmise that you are here on the same mission as ourselves—to protect the remains of some departed friend or neighbour from the ruthless hand of the 'resurrectionists.'

"Yes—yes," replied Meehaul, "we interred poor Esther this evening, and we are come to keep the first watch beside her grave."

The old man buried his face in his hands as he spoke the words, and a few large tear drops trickled out between his fingers.

"Esther! By my hand," exclaimed Duffy, still continuing the discourse in the native tongue, "that very name was continually on the lips of Garode Scully during his last hours. It is his son who lies asleep on yonder plank, but our conversation will not wake him from his slumbers."

"No, no," responded Ryan; "but his father—what of him? how did *he* end his wicked career?"

Kerin Duffy paused for a few moments as though arranging his thoughts, then, having assisted his memory by an inspiring draught, he resumed:—

"Old Garode was the reputed son of Jasper Greene, the most cruel, avaricious, and abandoned of the tyrants whom God permitted to scourge our people in the Penal times. How *he* ended his wicked life I suppose none of us can tell; but this I know, his illegitimate son inherited no share of his ill-gotten property, if I except a curiously-wrought dagger-knife which came into his possession in some unaccountable way and quite as mysteriously disappeared at the time of his death.

"Like father like son," is an old adage, for though Garode Scully outwardly professed a creed different from that of his disreputable sire, his habits and disposition were not much better. Disdaining the duties of an honest farmer, he frequented the patterns and fairs for miles around, and as a fomentor of feuds and quarrels amongst his countrymen, the authorities allowed

At the scandalous faction fight which took place in the churchyard of Clonard many years ago, it was his accursed hand that dealt the fatal blow to the good pastor who was endeavouring to restore peace and order, and if report speaks true, it was not the first nor yet the last time that he imbrued his hand in human blood. But perhaps I am speaking too rashly of the dead. He was my neighbour and he did me little injury; but then I always managed to keep clear of his toils. We all have serious faults to atone for and, mayhap, the time will come when someone else will relate them to the world. Scully's later years were marked by many reverses of fortune. One of his fine farms was sold off to pay his debts. All his children, save the boy who is reposing so near us at present, died in infancy, even his good wife died of a broken heart; but then he never looked upon her as his lawful spouse, and it was often whispered about that he had contracted a private marriage with a poor but handsome *colleen* in this part of the country ere he met with this woman whom the law acknowledged as his wife. During his last hours he was beset by terrible illusions. Sometimes he craved absolution from the priest whom he killed, accidentally I hope, at the fatal faction fight. At other times he would tell those present to close the windows for that 'Esther' was standing outside with her pale face pressed against the pane; again, he would call for a basin of water to wash his hands of the blood which covered them, in order that he might go with 'Esther,' who was still beckoning to him, to follow her. We tried to humour his every whim in the hope that reason and due repentance might restore tranquility to his mind. We brought a basin of pure water to his bedside, and it was while in the act of making his strange ablution that his soul passed through the eternal gates.

"As he expressed a wish to be interred in this churchyard, his people had his remains deposited here this morning, and at the request of his son I accompanied him hither to hold the first watch. Poor fellow! as the coffin was being carried through the gateway yonder he stumbled and fell, but I trust this omen of approaching death will not be verified in his case, for, exceptional though it may be, he has not inherited many of his father's evil traits, and may yet redeem his name from the odium cast upon it through his infamous ancestors."

MEEHAUL RYAN'S STORY.

When Kerin Duffy had finished his narration the glass was again called into requisition, and then Meehaul Ryan commenced his tale as follows:—

"You have performed your part in tracing the outlines of my wicked life, and I now feel it incumbent upon me to assist in filling in the picture. I knew Garode Scully but too well, and

wish I knew less—much less! Forty years ago on the death of my father I was appointed sole herdsman on the lands of Balough-ter. Being the only survivor of my family I lived alone in a comfortable cottage, at one end of which nestled a little cabin, tenanted by the Widow Downey and her daughter. The nearest homestead was Matt Treacy's, and as that was fully three-quarters of a mile distant, it might be said of me that I led the life of a hermit. Mrs Downey earned a precarious livelihood by gathering wool in the sheep-parks and spinning yarn for the farmers' wives. Esther—her only child—went out to service at an early age, and when, in her eighteenth year, she returned home to spend the Christmas with her mother, I thought a more beautiful damsel there was not in the world. I was fairly bewitched by her charms, and every moment I could spare from my business was spent in her company. How blithely rolled the hours as we went sliding on the frozen sheep-pool, or tracking the hares in the snow-covered plains? or, mayhap, seated by the blazing ingle, how we marvelled at the tales her mother was wont to relate! The happiest Christmas of my life passed away just like the snow melting from the fields, and when Esther hinted that she was about to return to her servitude I went down on my knees before her, and craved of her not to leave me; I tried to explain all the mad, boyish love, that filled my soul, and drew a somewhat extravagant picture of the happy life which would be ours in case she consented to be my wife. At first she appeared coy and mistrustful, and even went so far as to enumerate a goodly list of dowered maidens who were all ready and willing to start life with me; but when, by the sheer force of reasoning, I overruled all her objections, she placed her gentle hand in mine and gave her consent.

“None save those who have experienced the bliss of ‘first love’ can understand the extent of my happiness at that important moment of my life. I strained her to my bosom in a paroxysm of joy, and vowed to shield her from all sorrow while I breathed on earth. I did not ask her how much or how little she loved me, enough that she was mine—mine for ever!

You will pardon these tears, my friends; I am neither weak nor selfish, and it is for her hapless fate they flow. Which of us can see one day before us, or count upon the trials that may beset us ere the rising of to-morrow's sun? But let me not anticipate. Our marriage was to take place early in January, but before the appointed day came round Esther's mother was taken ill, and it had to be postponed till after Lent. The genial days of spring flew by on golden wings, and though Esther would sometimes playfully chide me for my folly when I brought her bunches of wild flowers from the hills, I felt she did not love me less for my gallantry. About the middle of March I got orders from my

in Kildare. To be separated from my affianced bride, even for a few days, was a bitter misery; but knowing that I dare not transfer the duty to another, I reluctantly complied with my employer's command. On the day of my departure Esther accompanied me to the high road, and three several times I turned back to bid her good-bye, hiding my weakness under the excuse of giving her fresh orders as to the management of the flocks. It is said that love has wings, and in my case it was verified, for owing to my anxiety to rejoin her I was enabled to reach home on St. Patrick's night, at least one day sooner than I had thought possible. Little did I think that morning as I plucked a shamrock from the wayside and fastened it proudly in my button-hole, that my fairest hopes would be doomed to wither before that rifled plant had ceased to bloom, yet so it was to be.

"Darkness had overtaken me before I reached my cottage, and as I sped along the path that led from the public highway to the rear of my dwelling, a presentiment of some unpleasantness awaiting me took firm root in my imagination. Acting under this strange feeling, I stole to Esther's window, and peeped in. A bright fire was blazing on the hearth, and two figures sat in front of it. One was Esther—I would recognise her amid ten thousand of her sex—but *the other!* A blinding film rose up before my eyes so that I could not see distinctly. Hurriedly but noiselessly I wiped the moisture from the pane, and peered in again. His face—yes I saw at a glance that it was handsome—his face, I say, was turned to hers, and gracious heaven! *her* hand was in his! I waited to see no more. The demon of jealousy fired my heart to revenge, and rushing madly to the door, I forced it open, and the next moment stood in the presence of the guilty pair."

It is very strange that even now, after the lapse of half a century, I can vividly recal to memory the scene that followed my unexpected arrival. The moment Esther recognised me she started up with a faint scream, her breath came rapidly, and a death-like pallor overspread her face. However, she quickly recovered sufficient presence of mind to assume a smile of welcome, and even pushed her duplicity so far as to extend her hand to me—aye, the very hand that so lately responded to the touch of a rival!

"No, no, Esther!" I cried out in as calm a voice as I could command, starting back until I struck against the seat on which the stranger was seated—"do not come near me again!"

My rival—if I may call him by that name—appeared to divine the situation of things at once, for he started up with a fearful oath and confronted me with all the apparent rage of an insulted dignitary. "Damn you, for a fool," he screamed, "do you mean to walk upon the people in this house?"

mortal is said to be endowed, at least I know that mine gave way before this double insult, and my outraged feelings stooped to vengeance. "And who are *you*?" I cried, springing forward and seizing him by the neckcloth, which I twisted so as to completely stifle his breathing—"Who are *you* that dares to insult and outrage *my home* as well as my person—speak, villain speak!" I knew he was incapable of uttering a word; I knew he would soon be strangled, strong man though he was, in my iron grasp, and yet I could not relax my hold.

For a few moments there was a silence terrible as death, then he reeled and fell heavily against the wall. Esther, who was standing by in silent amazement during the brief conflict, now sprang forward and caught me by the arm.

"Meehaul," she cried, in a voice almost inaudible from sheer terror, "Meehaul for my sake you will not strangle him."

"For your sake, Esther—no; let him live for your ruin!"

I removed my hold of him immediately, but the moment he recovered his breathing he rushed at me again, and had not Esther interposed her trembling form between us, I fear the quarrel would have had a fatal ending.

"It is a mistake on both sides," she said, "so let there be no bloodshed between you," and thereupon she endeavoured to force my opponent, who seemed to offer no great resistance, through the open doorway.

I do not know how long I remained standing there, alone and motionless, in the centre of the floor; it might be only a few minutes, though to my excited imagination it appeared an age. The severe and unexpected shock which the discovery of Esther's faithlessness gave me almost completely paralysed my brain, so that I felt as if enacting some terrible dream which would surely pass away. The coarse voice of the stranger bidding Esther "good night," beyond the porch, aroused me from my stupor.

"Good night, Esther," he said, in a hearty key as he moved off, "and tell the poor fool I regret interfering with him, for between you and me there is something to be made of him yet." Esther returned to the kitchen, and it is possible she would have endeavoured to explain the presence of the strange young man had not her mother called out to her from the little bedroom at that moment.

"What noise was that I hear below, Esther?" I could hear the invalid say, as the wretched daughter approached her bedside, after cautiously closing the door behind her.

Esther replied in a low whisper, and this time the old woman's remark smote upon my ear with dreadful import:

"Poor fellow! I never knew him to take drink before; but

but such is the weakness of poor human nature that one false step will often lead us down to the paths of degradation and shame. Think of the base return, my friends, which that artful and ungrateful woman made for all my kindness—for all my love; and try to imagine, if you can, the humiliation, the despair and bitter sorrow that ever after were to be mine.

Overwhelmed and distracted by the conflicting emotions that filled my soul I rushed from the cabin, and taking the key from its hiding-place I let myself into my own house, not for the purpose of obtaining the repose I stood so much in need of, but to brood over the awful revelations that had come to light so unexpectedly, and to endeavour if possible to tear from my heart the image of her who had made me feel that life was not a darksome vale. Ah! he was a philosopher who said that the course of true love did never yet run smoothly. Morning came at last, ushered in by moaning winds and murky clouds, as though kindly nature wished to sympathise with me. I tried to forget the incidents of the previous night, to reason myself into believing them the offsprings of a disagreeable nightmare, but one bitter thought remained firm and immovable—Esther was false!

In whatever station in life we may happen to be placed the force of habit enables us to perform our daily offices without requiring much aid from the will; certain it is that on the morning I am alluding to I took down my staff and, followed by my dogs, went the rounds of the various sheep-parks at the usual hour. Some of the sheep had strayed beyond their limits, and evening arrived before I could return to my dwelling. A female was standing at my door as I approached it, and it did not require a second glance to assure me it was Esther! For a moment I debated within myself whether I would avoid her as one unworthy of respect, but my better nature prevailed, and I decided to allow her an opportunity of explaining her conduct. Arrived within a few paces of her I ventured to raise my eyes to her face, and oh! what a change was there. Her cheeks, once blooming as a rose, were pale and flaccid; dark ring encircled her eyes—those eyes that once glistened like ripe sloes—and her auburn hair hung down in dishevelled locks. I also observed the state of trepidation in which she appeared before me.

“Esther,” I said in as firm a voice as I could command, “what is the matter with you?”

“I thought, Meehaul” she replied, “from the way you acted last night that you would not speak to me again, though you were mistaken about him.” She could not forego a coquettish toss of the head as she said this.

“Him?” My cheeks flushed crimson at the recollection. “You know in your heart, Esther, that—you—lie!”

“ You are a coward to use that word, Meehaul, and I can tell you that Garode Scully is your superior in every way. He has fine farms in Meath, and everywhere he goes——”

She stopped short as though she saw some strange expression in my countenance.

“ His farms may be as fine as you consider himself to be, Esther, but I fear his principles are not on a par”

“ You know nothing about him,” she observed hurriedly, “ he is a cousin of my own, and lives close to where I was at service, and is just come down on a visit to Matt Tracy’s.”

“ But, Esther, I cannot be hoodwinked ; he stands to you in the light of a lover instead of a friend.”

Again she broke down, and this time the tears stood in her eyes.

“ You do not know how it is, Meehaul,” she cried, “ but for all his fine lands I never gave you up. He pestered me with his regards and swore I would be the finest lady in all Meath if I would but consent to marry him—and few would blame me if I did—but from this day forward I promise you never to meet him if you will only ——”

Her sobs broke her utterance, and even I felt my own heart throbbing with compassion and forgiveness, but I steeled myself against the thought.

“ No, Esther,” I said, “ you can never be the same to me again.”

A further appeal was rising to her lips when a horseman came galloping up from the high road. Evidently he was in quest of either of us.

“ Who can it be ?”

I glanced towards Esther. The crimson blushes were again mantling her cheeks.

There followed an interval of grave suspense, shared by both of us, perhaps ; then, as the horseman drew sufficiently near to enable me to identify him as a herd-boy in the employment of my master, the glow of expectancy faded from her countenance, and she heaved a deep sigh—but whether indicative of relief or disappointment I could not know. The young lad was the bearer of a message from Mr Grogan (who was somewhat eccentric in his way of doing business) to the effect that I was to meet him early on the following morning in the fair of Bal-nabarna, where he intended purchasing all the good hoggets he could procure. I again turned round to see what effect the news would have upon Esther, but she was gone ; probably she felt no interest in my affairs, or maybe her womanly delicacy induced her to withdraw : in any case I forced myself to the con-

my own enfeebled mind? Perhaps my best answer is that some unaccountable impulse urges me to the recital to-night.

The village where the fair was to be held being a considerable distance away, in order to reach it in good time on foot (I could not ride) I was obliged to set out that very evening, and as it was probable that I might have to assist in driving the sheep to Kildare, the boy was to take my place till I returned. Heavy heart and sorely distracted in mind, I departed from my home with pride or something akin to it preventing me from exchanging a parting word with Esther. Once or twice, indeed, I looked back to see if she was watching me from the door of her cabin, but no woman's form was visible, and I hastened on, oblivious of everything around me.

That night passed away without repose for either mind or body, and the morning found me pacing up and down the streets of the little village waiting the arrival of my master. He came at last; the sheep were bought, and, contrary to his wishes—first he saw I was unwell—I persisted in helping his drover to bring them home. The rain which was hovering overhead since the previous morning now came down in sweeping showers, and before we had made half the journey we were drenched to the skin. The master, having ridden on before us, took care to make every provision for our comfort on our arrival, but for me they came too late. I was stricken down on a bed of fever, and for weeks I lay tossing about on my couch in a semi-conscious state. When at length the doctor allowed me to converse with the servants who attended me, I was surprised to learn that the days of April were drawing to a close. I inquired about affairs in Baloughter, if Bryan Daly, the herd-boy was there still, and how the ewes were getting on? to all of which I received satisfactory answers; but no one spoke of Esther Downey, hence, I concluded that she was still with her mother, and that I had not raved about her during my illness. Still I could not rest easy till I saw her again, for with my fever passed away much of the bitter jealousy that rankled in my bosom.

I remember well the evening I set out on my homeward journey. There was a balmy freshness in the air, and all the bloom of spring was visible in the landscape around me. Mr Grogan accompanied me with his car the greater part of the way, but even with my haste the stars were twinkling in the great blue dome over me when I reached the stile beside Matt Tracy's house. The sturdy old farmer himself was seated on the fence as I mounted it to take the short-cut; he was, doubtless, ruminating on the goodly portions he would be enabled to give his three sons, thanks to his own untiring industry, and after we had e

"Did you meet that young Scully on your way?" he asked, with an uneasy shrug of his shoulders.

"No," I replied; "what about him? What has he done?"

"Nothing that I know of; but I thought you should have met him. He is coming back and forwards here for the last few weeks on the strength of my wife being a relation of his, but I fear he is not for the good of them boys of mine. Herself says he is only a good-natured *gomach*, but he's continually preaching about standing up for liberty, and the rascal having too much of it; and them *gorsoons* of mine that never stirred out at night till he came here are out every night hunting and poaching like a pack of thieves! I gave him a bit of my mind this morning, and he swore never to darken my door again, but I have my doubts." And the old man shook his head sagely as he stood up and strode into his comfortable dwelling.

I need not tell you that this piece of information filled my mind with serious apprehensions. It is true the man was almost a stranger to me, and as yet I knew very little about his disposition; the little I did know, however, helped to convince me that his principles were not good. My path lay close to a deep hollow or ravine, about half a mile from my cottage. It was called the Haunted Hollow from the fact that a young man was murdered there years before by a desperate robber and outlaw known as Cahal Roe. As I passed the spot I reverentially lifted my hat, but the brief prayer I was about to offer froze on my lips, for there by the dim starlight I could discern the outlines of a human form standing close to a large rock near the centre of the hollow. I was not possessed of sufficient strength of nerve, however, to take more than a hasty glance at the apparition, so hurrying on I endeavoured to reach my home as quick as possible, when happening to look ahead of me I descried a moving figure on the path before me. Before I had time to rally my affrighted senses after this second shock, Bryan Daly, the herd-boy, came tripping up to me. He, too, appeared, to be somewhat terrified, but when he recovered sufficient composure to reply to my anxious questioning, he blurted out:

"I fear there's something wrong with Esther Downey, for she was away all day yesterday, and she was inquiring for you to-day and never stopped weeping. There was a ring on her finger, too——"

"A ring!" I almost shrieked; and who put it there?"

"Who knows," remarked the boy with insufferable coolness; "may be it was that fellow I heard her call Garode, for he was around here pretty often, and between ourselves I saw him steal a hat of your's last night when he thought I was asleep, but I was afraid to move, for he had a bright looking dagger-knife

“And where is she now?” I asked, as I clutched his arm for support.

“Sure that’s what I was going to find out when I met you. I overheard them making arrangements last night for a meeting at this hour to-night in the Haunted Hollow, and I know she took along this path half-an-hour ago.”

This was almost more than I could bear. With the rage of a mad man and possessing just as little foresight, I rushed back to the fatal hollow, crept stealthily down the side of it, and then stooping on my hands and knees stole along as noiselessly as a snake through the thick clump of furze till I reached the boulder. I knew that two persons were engaged in serious conversation on the other side of it, but could not understand their discourse till I got close to the rock; when I did, however, I drank in the words like liquid fire.

“I don’t want to parley with you, Esther,” the cursed traitor was saying, “you must help me to betray Ryan, or else you and I part here. You seem to think a lot about the dog.”

“I will never betray him, Garode, so you need not frighten me so.”

“Take care, my lady! That ring on your finger counts for little.”

“Garode—Garode Scully, what do you mean?”

She was kneeling now, and I knew that some terrible emotion was swaying her. He laughed—a loud bitter laugh.

“What I mean is this: our marriage yesterday was a mock one—clergyman and all—but I’ll go through a real one with you if you help me to get rid of your old lover, Ryan.”

“Oh, Meehaul Ryan, why did I ever prove false to you!” shrieked the unfortunate woman in an agony of despair?

“Enough,” hissed her betrayer in a paroxysm of rage, “you will die before you get the chance of betraying me!”

He caught her by the hair, and for an instant there was a flash of glittering steel above her head.

Whilst the dialogue, of which I only caught the closing sentences, was passing between the pair, I had, unconsciously I must say, glided around the boulder, so that at the moment Esther’s treacherous lover raised his arm to strike the fatal blow, I was standing close behind him. Divining his motive my hand was quickly on his wrist. “Murderer!” I hissed in his ear, it was the only word I could articulate—but the effect was instantaneous. A spasmodic quiver shot through his frame, the knife fell from his nerveless grasp, and as his gaze met mine I saw that his face was livid and distorted with mingled rage and terror. How vividly I can recall that terrible scene just now as though I were looking upon it in a picture. The moon was rising clear and full from behind a bank of clouds, and its

features of Esther Downey, as with hands clasped together, and still retaining her kneeling posture, she seemed passively awaiting her fate. Scully, like an avenging fury, was stooping over her, while my protecting arm interposed in the nick of time. I thought I could hear Esther's heart beat audibly in the awful silence that ensued—perhaps it was my own. During that brief spell my rival never stirred a muscle; perhaps surprise and terror had transfixed him to the spot, or perhaps he was mentally engaged in measuring my strength; in any case I failed to avail myself of the advantage thus afforded me, and soon I had cause to regret my mistake. Again the fiendish glare I had witnessed once before burned in his eyes; again his white teeth gleamed and grated against each other, and before I could be aware of his movement, he sprang forward and clutched me by the throat. In the deadly struggle that followed both of us soon rolled to the ground, and vainly I exercised all my strength in an endeavour to overpower him. In my enfeebled state of health I might as well attempt to hold down an enraged lion. Gradually I felt his snake-like fingers coiling around my neck; a dull heavy stupor was coming over me, and in another moment I would have lost all consciousness, when suddenly a noise as of something crashing through the furze and brushwood, followed by two startling yells, broke the stillness. I knew at once that my two faithful dogs were coming to my rescue; soon they were upon the would-be murderer, their relentless fangs sinking deep into his flesh. He relaxed his hold of me with a despairing cry for help. I knew the infuriated animals would kill him, and the shock acting as a kind of restorative, I struggled to my feet and exerted all my remaining strength to save him from their fury, for though I abhorred him individually, I felt I was bound by every law, human and divine, to preserve, if possible, the life of my fellow-man. Scully, through my assistance, turned over on his side, his hand came in contact with something—it was the knife he had let fall. Soon he was on his knees lunging about him with all the desperation of a man who is fighting a duel to the death, and knowing full well that in case he survived the conflict, my life would not be worth a moment's purchase, I decided to make good my retreat. I looked round for Esther, but she, too, had taken flight, whither I knew not. Occasionally sounds of the struggle within the Haunted Hollow fell upon my ears as I rushed breathlessly to my cottage, nature asserting strongly in me her primal law—self-preservation. I found the herd-boy, Bryan Daly, anxiously awaiting my return. He, too, appeared scared and terrified beyond description, for from his stand-point above the hollow he had witnessed part of the deadly struggle, and as he fled back to the house, panic-

very instant for Kildare, so deep-rooted was his fear of the "black man," as he designated Scully, and as I cared not to oppose his request just then, for I wished to be alone, I suffered him to go away. Of that night and its weary hours of alternate anxiety and bitter grief I cannot trust myself to speak. With a mind full of contending emotions, dazed and shocked at the remembrance of the revolting scenes in which I had been an unwilling actor, almost insane at the thought of Esther's unfaithfulness, it is little wonder that my overstrained senses craved that repose from nature which affords us a temporary immunity from surrounding troubles. But mine was not a refreshing slumber, for again and again the horrors of the previous evening passed before my mental vision. Suddenly I awoke with a start—a weird, unearthly sound like the prolonged wail of a *banshee* broke in upon the silence of my room, and as I strained my hearing in an endeavour to make out its import, a voice which I knew to be Esther's cried out in broken accents—

"Farewell, Meehaul Ryan—farewell for ever!"

I tried to rise, but my tottering limbs refused to support me at first, and when at length I succeeded in reaching the door and drawing back the bolt no Esther was visible; but, almost at my feet, as though guarding the door, lay one of my faithful hounds, his body transpierced with several wounds. At another time this sight would have affected me very much—mine was a sensitive nature, adverse to the shedding of blood in any way—but now I looked upon the bleeding brute with indifference, and even derived some consolation from the thought that his comrades might be lying stark dead in the Haunted Hollow, for it gave hope that Scully, hated rival, false betrayer though he was, had effected his escape. Agitated by this thought I took down my stick and by its aid succeeded in reaching the spot; the sun was yet low in the heavens, and the fatal hollow lay half in shadow. I peered down timidly and curiously as a man rescued from drowning examines for the first time the place where for him life and death stood in the balance. My gaze was quickly attracted to the familiar rock in the centre; a lifeless form lay stretched in the shadow; a man's hat lay near! As I looked the shadow moved back a little, and then I breathed a sigh of relief, for what I mistook for a human form was that of my too faithful Pluto, and the hat even at that distance I knew to be my own, though not the one I had worn on the previous evening. How it came to be there and for what purpose I could only conjecture. But in all probability the villain had concocted a plot by which he expected to have me arraigned as the murderer of Esther!

And now my friends I am about to relate a circumstance

to break in upon my soul again. I had become callous to grief; my too impressionable nature had suddenly undergone a change, and this I rightly attributed to the powerful effects of prayer—the first appeal to God, perhaps, that had gone out from my heart for days and weeks. Well, I tried to resume my duties like a new man. That same evening as I happened to be passing Esther's cabin I was surprised to see her mother standing at the door, but oh! how changed. Her emaciated frame and pale, cadaverous countenance contrasted strangely with the plump, fresh-faced widow of a year ago. There was a far-off look in her hollow eyes as she gazed away towards the setting sun; indeed I thought I might be enabled to pass her by unnoticed, so fixed and immovable was her stare, but I failed in doing so.

“Why, Meehaul, won't you come in for a while?” she called out in an unusually loud key. “I'm feeling a bit lonesome this evening since Esther went away. Sure I don't think it was lucky to put back your marriage,” she continued in a confidential mood as I accepted her invitation, “for now that I'm well again I see no sign of it coming off, especially she going off to service for another quarter.”

“And do you think you are really quite recovered?” I asked, in an endeavour to change the subject.

“Why I was able to get up early this morning, and I think I feel as well as I did twenty years ago. Just as you came up I was thinking of the day I was married,” she went on, her eyes lighting up with a strange lustre. “It was a midsummer-eve, and there was a bonfire lighted under the old hawthorn bush in front of the door yonder. The boys and girls were dancing pleasantly, for there were a good many homesteads around here then. Let me tell you, avic, I could dance as well as the best of them, and when a tall, redhaired stranger suddenly broke in upon our merry-making and demanded a partner to dance ‘Kitty's Wedding’ with him, I thought it no harm to step forward and offer him my hand. I give you my word he could foot a reel! and great was the applause when we finished. He did not remain long—just one dance—but he had scarcely gone when word arrived that young Scanlan (a half brother of Matt Tracey's at the stile) was found murdered in the hollow above there, his brains beaten out with a stone, and before night it was discovered that Cahal Roe—the notorious outlaw and the very man I had danced with—was the murderer. Those who a little while before applauded me for my skill in dancing now frowned upon me as though I had acted the part of an accomplice in the dreadful tragedy; and when I held out my hand to my husband as if claiming his protection, he, too started back, horror-stricken, and little could I blame him, for

My poor husband was a weak-minded man who put too much faith in charms and omens, and the accidental mark upon my wrist so wrought upon his imagination that he rapidly declined in health, and before that day twelvemonth he was laid in the clay, leaving me to provide for myself and my infant as best I might. *Mavrone!* it is I had the hard trial rearing Esther before you came to live here, *Meehaul!* though I fear I will have to account yet for being too kind to her—for allowing her to indulge in those little faults that children are prone to commit. I thought my husband would speak about it when he came to me this evening; he looks as young as ever——”

“I fear you are not well, *Essie,*” I interrupted, for I saw that her mind was rambling. “Might I not go for the priest before you get worse?”

“No, *Meehaul,* asthore. I don’t need a priest yet awhile, for I think I am getting better.” Her voice grew weaker as she said this, and it was evident that the shadow of death had crossed her threshold. “I think I oughtn’t to sit up too long, though,” she resumed, “and you call in the course of the night, *Meehaul,* if you think——”

She did not finish the sentence, but rising from her seat with considerable difficulty she hobbled off to her room. I arose also, and having closed the kitchen door behind me, proceeded to look after my flocks. The broad, clear moon was gliding serenely amongst the countless stars that in my childhood years I looked upon as the windows of heaven, and not a breeze disturbed the quiet repose of the landscape around me. Everything appeared at rest save my own broken heart. And now a fresh anxiety tortured my mind. Esther’s mother was dying; she ought not to be allowed to die without receiving the ministrations of a priest. I was not far from the high road, and the thought occurred to me that I would go to the village, which was not two miles away, and inform Father John of her critical condition. But then the clergyman was old and feeble, and he might not consider her case to be very urgent, and it was quite probable that she might outlive the night. A heavy torpor overpowered me—maybe I *did* sleep—while I ruminated on the best course to adopt under the circumstances, and when at length I forced my eyelids asunder. I was surprised to see how far the moon had glided on her course. I drew forth my beads, and directing my steps towards the house, commenced to repeat the decades. A slight noise like the momentary rustle of leaves caused me to turn my head quickly. A female form rushed past me with the quickness of a dove—and let me whisper it softly in your ears, kind friends, I recognised in the dress and outlines of the figure my dead or dying neighbour—*Essie*

treating apparition two sable hounds passed me by in hot pursuit. I trembled as I saw them gain upon her—I trembled for her safety, I say—but soon she reached the churchyard wall, and the next instant disappeared inside, while the baffled hounds, deprived of their prey, turned aside and vanished in the shadow of the hill. I knew what had taken place even before I had reached the widow's cabin. I mechanically made my way to her bedside, and oh! what a sight confronted me. The moonlight shining in through the window revealed her lifeless form sitting upright in the bed, her shrivelled arms extended as though imploring for aid. The next thing I distinctly remembered was finding myself on the highway leading to the village. The clatter of a horse's feet sounded in the distance, and a horseman—whom I knew to be a priest from his peculiar dress—galloped up to the spot where I was standing. I raised my hat in salutation.

“Am I in time, friend?” he called out in English, as he reined up his horse.

“No, father,” I replied, “the poor woman is dead.”

“Dead!” he repeated. “How long is she dead?”

“I cannot tell you, father, I was out at the time.”

“Are you the man that called me? I think I recognise your voice.” And the priest bent down a strange face to mine.

I told him I was certain no person went to call him, and then I related the strange occurrence I have just described to you.

The young priest shook his head, as though my story appeared doubtful to him, as, indeed, well it might; then after a long pause he observed:—

“Your mind, young man, is evidently in an unsettled state at present, or else you are addicted to somnambulism—sleep-walking. This morning I arrived from France to assist my uncle in the discharge of his pastoral duties; To-night I had just retired to bed when I heard a double rap on the window-pane. Thinking it was a sick call I hurriedly rose and asked what was the matter. The answer came in your voice—I could not mistake it—‘Widow Downey is dying—hasten after me and take the Athlone road.’

“I cannot accuse myself of having made much delay, but being a stranger in the neighbourhood I mistook the road, and consequently had to retrace my way to the village. May God have mercy on her soul! I tried to perform my duty.”

He then gave me directions about the wake and funeral, advising me to seek the assistance of some neighbours at once, “for,” he added, a grim smile flitting across his features, “it is not good to be alone in this eerie place.”

I followed his advice, the neighbours, few and far between, assisted me as best they could, and in a few short days the grave had closed over all that was mortal of the hapless Widow Downey.

crowd collected in the Market-square, and anxious to see what kind of attraction claimed their attention I stood on a piece of timber and looked towards the centre of the group. It was one of a wretched ballad-singer about to entertain her rustic audience with a song. A little boy with the vacant stare of an imbecile was holding on to her mire-bedraggled garments, but her own face was turned from me at the time. Presently more than one voice in the crowd called out—

“Give us one of your own love-songs, Esther !”

Could I believe my senses? Yes, there stood the unfortunate object of my early love with wan and wasted cheeks, with saddened eyes and tangled hair! I would have called out to her in my wild dismay; I would have asked her to forget her shame and her sorrow and come back to the old home were I not charmed into silence by her song, which at that moment burst from her lips. Esther had a voice toned to my ear like the warbling of a nightingale, soft and low, and capable of the sweetest modulation, and the song she sung was a favourite of mine in the early happy years of our acquaintance. Thus ran the first verses:—

Come all fair maidens in time take warning,
 All handsome young men I pray you shun,
 For they're like the stars of a summer morning—
 When the daylight's dawning they are gone.
 They will sit and tell you some pleasant story,
 They will vow and swear that they love you true;
 But that is only to blast your glory,
 For little love they have got for you!

There was a spontaneous burst of applause from the crowd and then Esther's song proceeded to detail the evil consequences that followed a ruthless wooing. I think there was a wistful earnestness in her voice as she sang the closing stanzas:—

I would I were a blackbird or swallow,
 Or else to be a true turtle dove;
 I would fly away from this vale of sorrow
 And rest among the green boughs above.
 While lonely walking I'd 'round him flutter,
 I'd tap his breast with my little wings;
 And then I'd ask him how could he flatter,
 Or tell so many delusive things!

The song had ceased; the sympathetic audience had dispersed and I was yet chained to the spot by the affecting melody and the chequered memories it recalled, when I found myself rudely shaken, and on raising my eyes from the ground I beheld my master, Gerald Grogan, a look of annoyance or displeasure on his face.

“What, dreaming again, Meehaul? or is it joining in for

The blustering grazier hurried me from the spot, and I thought had seen the last of Esther Downey. Fate, however, ordained otherwise. One summer evening some three years afterwards I was sitting in the door of my cabin when I thought I saw her apparition approaching. At first I felt I was dreaming, but when she stood before me and I heard once more the old familiar voice, and gazed intently on the pale, sweet face, I knew that it was herself in person. There was no demonstration on the part of either of us; pity had usurped the place of love, and duty was all she claimed. She recounted to me her trials and sufferings, wept some genuine tears of sorrow for departed happiness and departed friends, and then quietly took up her abode in the little cabin that in happier years sheltered herself and her parent. Her idiot boy, the offspring of her ill-requited love, continued to share this humble dwelling with her until her death; and now, to-day, by one of those strange coincidences which we marvel at but cannot understand, she is laid at rest within a few feet of the man who so basely wronged her. Ah! Scully was one of those agents whom the Evil One employs to work destruction amongst his fellow beings! It was through his means that Matt Tracey's sons were induced to become Whiteboys, and it was through his means they were betrayed when they made the unsuccessful raid for arms up in King's County, which resulted in the shooting of the youngest and the public execution of the other two. I stood in front of the scaffold on that day, and it was heart-rending to see the aged mother sitting between the two empty coffins that were soon to receive the lifeless and mangled forms of her darling sons. Neighbours, I have acquitted myself of a disagreeable task; I have told you much that I would rather bury in oblivion, but your kindly interest and apparent sympathy have induced me to unfold my life story to the end.

A heavy silence fell upon the group when Meehaul Ryan concluded his narrative, a silence broken only by the sighing of the wind in the trees overhead, and the persistent drip drip of the rain as it fell from the roof of the shanty. The glass was again handed round, and Ryan arose from his seat to replenish the fire with more faggots when his gaze encountered a startling object standing in the doorway. His companions noticing his surprise also looked in the same direction, and by the aid of the dim firelight they could distinguish a tall figure, erect and motionless, and dressed in a long greyish garment that seemed to be disturbed by the fitful breeze outside.

"The White Spectre!" ejaculated all three simultaneously.

The supposed apparition glided slowly towards the fire and trusting the end of a long staff into the decaying embers caused them to emit a faint bluish flame, which enabled the startled watchers to examine his form and features more dis-

the weight of years ; his white, flowing beard, and the Oriental looking cloak—a cast-off livery—in which his lean figure was enveloped giving him a patriarchal appearance.

“It is Conor Stanton, if he is alive,” observed Meehaul Ryan in a low whisper to his companions.

“Conor Stanton—what is left of him,” rejoined the stranger as he stooped down to warm his benumbed fingers.

“Then be seated, and take share of our small comforts,” said Ryan, as he filled him out a glass of the liquor, “It is two score years since I first saw you, and you were then a hard-working man, perhaps a little too quiet and sober for those you came in contact with.”

“Not so, not so,” he replied, as he gulped down the liquor and rested his back against the wall, “I was then what I have ever been since—an impoverished slave labouring for my daily bread because the curse pronounced upon me—not by human lips, but by a ghost from the world of shadows—one whose fate, whether of eternal bliss or misery, depended upon me——”

The speaker paused a moment as if endeavouring to catch his breath, and then ejaculated in tones of uttermost despair—

“Ah ! lost ! lost ! lost !”

“You should not give way to melancholy forebodings,” observed Duffy. “These supernatural impressions are in most cases created by our own diseased imaginations.”

“Mine was a fearful ordeal,” continued Stanton, scarcely heeding the last remark, “and as you have shown me you can sympathise with the most miserable creature that ever walked this earth, I will tell you the dreadful secret of my life.”

PART II.

“You behold in me, neighbours (commenced Conor Stanton) one who has been forced by the stern decree of fate to tread the weary way of life unfriended and unpitied—an Ishmaelite in the midst of mine own brethren. But how could it be otherwise, for is not a ban upon my name since the Stantons of Maymore more than five hundred years ago, outraged the sanctuary Ballinrobe Monastery, and then basely murdered their own leader.* My father was a gunner in King James’s army, and it is a well-attested fact that on the fatal day of the Boyne the disposal of the three crowns depended on his will for a few moments. My father was sighting his gun as King James happened to ride by.

“‘What’s the reward for a King’s head, my liege?’

“The King reined up his horse and appeared to understand the situation at once.

*H. J. O’Connell’s *Irish Genealogy*.

"I command you not to fire—I am pledged not to seek his life," he said hurriedly, and then rode away.

We all know how it fared with faint-hearted James and his valiant army. In the retreat from the Boyne my father was overtaken by a trooper who tried to cut him down with his heavy sword, a task in which he was likely to succeed had not my father put an end to the contest by sending a bullet through his adversary's throat. As the red life-blood gushed through the fatal wound the fallen trooper turned his gaze upon my father who naturally enough paused a moment to look upon his prostrate enemy. In that instant they mutually recognized each other.

"Conor Stauton," said the trooper, "I blame you not for what you have done, for in the excitement of battle our friends and foes are only distinguishable by the colours they fight under. We were once schoolfellows and neighbours, and, by the memory of our former friendship I conjure you, in case you survive this war, to convey to my young wife the assurance of my constant love. There is a trifle of gold in my pockets, take it to her and tell her —" What else he would have added cannot be known, for at that moment a convulsive shudder seized his frame and he closed his eyes in death. My father soon found means of leaving the army, he sought out the widow of the defunct Williamite trooper, and succeeded so well in consoling her for the loss of her brave and generous husband that they were soon united as man and wife. But affairs did not prosper with them as well as they expected. Their gold drained away, their cattle died, and for fully a score of years they were childless, notwithstanding all their yearnings and longings—all the fervent prayers, and, sooth to say, all the diabolical charms they made use of in order to induce the Providence they mocked to present them with an heir. At length their predominant wish was gratified, and at the angel's bidding I was ushered into the world, a temporary consolation to them, a life-long misery to myself. I was allowed to grow up in ignorance and idleness, my parents being types of that ultra-affectionate class who "spare the rod and spoil the child."

The years of my childhood rolled away all too swiftly, and a time came when I was thrown upon my own resources—an orphan. Perhaps I was not viciously bad—indeed it appears I only stood in need of some correcting influence—for when my old neighbour, Donal Clery, who took pride in boasting that he had never been to the wars, proffered to show me how to till the stubborn soil, I settled down to that honest avocation. His only daughter, Norah, I take leave to mention, was a strong inducement to my adopting this course, for though not gifted with beauty she was industrious, good-natured and virtuous—traits

Old Donal was not slow in noting my partiality for his daughter, and endeavoured to show his approval by taking a greater interest in my affairs, while Norah, on her part, delicately hinted that there was not another *boughal* in Westmeath whom she would prefer before me, a compliment which I did not hesitate to return. Things went on smoothly enough for some time—how long I care not to remember—and then an event occurred which wrought a sad change in the position of my affairs. The lord of the soil was Sir Thomas Dillon, a knight who had won distinction on the battlefield, and according to a long-established custom he claimed gratuitous labour from the tenantry at various seasons of the year. My turn to comply with this duty having come round I was sent to assist the gardner in planting some fruit-trees. One evening the squire's youngest daughter happened to enter the garden, and as she approached where I was standing I stood and gazed in wrapped admiration on her beauty. Verily the flowers that bloomed around me were not half so beautiful! I am sure she noticed my embarrassment, for she suddenly turned back on her walk, but had not receded many paces when she suddenly stooped, broke off a rare flower at the stem, and running up to me fastened it on my breast, saying as she did so, "You are my knight henceforward, and I enjoin you to wear this ensign in memory of me!" For a moment her silvery laugh made music in my ears—for a moment that bewitching syren stood before me in all her radiant beauty, and then as suddenly vanished from my view. Alas! poor Norah! Cery, how low and insignificant you appeared to me then.

As I returned to my humble domicile on the evening of the eventful day I have referred to I felt as though I had entered on a new state of existence. A balmy freshness breathed over the face of nature; the first flowers of spring were laughing merrily in the breeze, and the woods were green with verdure; earth and sky were filled with a beauty I had never noticed before. Such is the effect of love, for a little while so good, so sweet, so pure, it transforms our world into a Paradise; but sooner or later comes the bitter awakening, even as it comes to the senseless inebriate who barter his reason for a cup of wine! Poor Norah! I fear I snubbed her too severely that evening, for when as usual she endeavoured to amuse me with her artless gossip I lent her a heedless ear.

"You are in your sulky fits this evening, Conor," she said chidingly, "but I have some important news to tell you. Tom Gorman, the rich cattle dealer, was at our house to-day trying to get me in marriage."

"And what answer did you give him, Norah?"

"I could give only one reply, Conor, for I have put all my

is given me to know, no matter by what means, that we are not to be united in the marriage state—that we are not destined for one another—so I fear you have acted too hasty in refusing Gorman.”

Norah appeared transfixed with surprise while I spoke, though how far my words affected her peace of mind I am unable to determine, for amongst the lowly class to which both of us belonged affection does not always ripen into love. Instead, therefore of seeking an explanation of my strange conduct she turned haughtily away and left me free to indulge in my own ambitious musings.

The day died out and the stars ascended their thrones, while I still remained leaning on the style dreaming of Emmaline Dillon, and deducing the most chimerical probabilities from her playful action in the garden. I knew full well it was great presumption on my part to think of her even for an instant. I was a person of low birth, reduced to the position of a serf, and in my present circumstances I felt it would be utter folly to try to win this beautiful and accomplished young lady, but human hope is strong enough to bridge the widest gulf or to overcome the greatest obstacle.

Not far from where I lived—in a rude hovel built against the side of a low hill—there resided a venerable recluse who had the reputation of being deeply versed in the occult sciences. Sometimes he pursued the then treasonable profession of a schoolmaster, and he was held in great esteem by the surrounding peasantry, for rumour had it that he once filled a higher and a holier office. He himself hinted that he belonged to one of the great O's of the North, but no further clue to his personal history could be extracted from him. After long deliberation within myself I determined to pay him a visit in order to learn from him by what means I might hope to win the beautiful daughter of Sir Thomas Dillon. Within a very few days after my interview with Norah I turned my footsteps one evening in the direction of the hut of the Solitary. As I approached the open door I perceived him crouched low by his smouldering fire, engaged in the perusal of a massive volume; and scarcely had I intercepted the little light which gleamed through the doorway than he had started to his feet and welcomed me with a politeness and courtesy which clung to him through all his fallen fortunes. I explained to him the object of my visit, and I was almost surprised—I need not say how agreeably surprised—at the readiness with which he listened to my rhapsody, and the earnest attention he paid me. He entered cordially into the spirit of my scheme, and made light of the difficulties on my path. “There are,” said he “three agencies by which man may

seemed not any of these essentials. He informed me that it was within my power to acquire any of them, and he professed to give me my choice as to which. I selected Talent. He praised my selection, and thereupon broke into a long discourse upon the advantages of education, and enumerated many of the distinguished scholars of by-gone times—men who in various instances had influenced the destinies of nations.

You may wonder then how I, totally illiterate as I then was, could remember the names thus poured into my ears, but they impressed themselves upon my memory like the titles of the grotesque beings who figure in our fireside tales. The recluse voluntarily offered to guide me into the paths of learning, and many an evening I spent with him in the fond hope of one day finding myself ranked among the famous scholars of the world—and when my spirits sunk, as the obstacles on my way loomed larger, the thought of the bright eyes of Emmaline Dillon cheered me on. It was insanity—I see it now; and yet in the midst of my madness then I could see ever and anon the deeper and darker insanity which, by fits and starts, overshadowed the light of my preceptor. On these occasions his wild and yet not altogether incoherent ravings wandered over many a subject—grave and gay, chiefly, however, subjects of a gloomy cast; *death* in various forms and under aspects being one of his favourite topics. And in one of those moods (and also strange to say, one of his calmest and most lucid intervals afterwards) he extracted from me a solemn promise that I would bury his body wherever his dead body should be found. Alas, what pitiable notions predominate in great minds when once the cloud settles upon them!

I need not tell at any length of the darkness and despair that closed for awhile over me as I gradually discovered that it was in vain for me to attempt to become learned. Then I knew even in the midst of my delirium that personal beauty was utterly beyond my reach, hence I concentrated all my thoughts on the pursuit of wealth, and abandoned totally my studies with the recluse, yet not cutting off my intercourse with him. He was now my adviser, not my tutor. It was about this time that Norah Clery was joined in marriage to the cattle dealer I have mentioned, and it was only at this time that I learned that an uncle of hers, who had long resided in one of the wealthiest of the South American countries, had left her all his fortune. This sudden accession of wealth on her part, filled me with bitter and conflicting emotions. I yielded myself so unreservedly to the pursuit of wealth and the thought of it, that before long I was far more intensely mad than ever I had been in my vain dream of learned renown. And now, in my long and lonely walks,

slowly but surely the feeling grew upon me—grew in strength and certainty as grew my vision of future wealth. I felt it in the morning—in the noonday—in the twilight dim, and in the midnight darkness. Day by day, as I have just said, this feeling became more definite, and I thought that now and again a something glided along by my left side—a vapoury presence which I could not define. Feelings of fear crept around my heart, but I quieted these by a fancy that occurred to me that even this half-seen spectre had some possible connection with the fortune that was yet to be mine. At the time of the first appearance of a dimly outlined form near me, my friend, the hermit, was absent on one of a series of mysterious and unaccountable journeys which he had long been in the habit of making. I was most anxious for his return, in order to consult him regarding this visitant, which seemed determined on constituting itself my ‘familiar’—as such attendant spirits are designated. For days and days I paid visits almost hourly to his abode, but without success. The days passed into weeks, but at length one dark and dismal evening on approaching his hut, I observed faint streaks of light through the crevices of the rude door, and I knew that he had returned. I approached and knocked; there was no response. Slowly I opened the door, creaking on its rusty hinges. No voice greeted me. I could dimly discern a dark and clumsy looking object close to the decaying fire. Although full of dread, and almost overcome with a feeling of nausea, yet I walked stealthily towards it—half expecting the terrible truth. In the uncertain light I could still see nothing with certainty, and so I bent my body and stretched forth my hand toward that part of the mass which lay nearest the embers. Oh! I still can feel the revulsion and the shudder which crept over me—and still I can hear in my own ears the shriek I uttered—as my hand closed on the jaw of the dead hermit—my thumb sinking in the softness of his protruded tongue! But, suddenly, and as is their wont, the embers of the fire sank and rolled a little outward into a small glowing mass. And in a moment afterwards a little flame shot upward towards me. It was the burning of *the dead man’s hair*. A coal had touched it in the falling. I started back aghast, but the momentary view I caught of his features and of his glassy eyes in that lurid light haunts me to this day. I draw a veil over the succeeding scenes. Suffice it to say that I—I alone—actuated by some unnatural impulse, buried him beneath that hearthstone—buried him where his corpse had been found, in accordance with my promise. Regarding his death I can give no explanation, it might result from accident, but more probably suicide. I merely tell the facts as they occurred.

Very soon after this I summoned up courage to invite the spirit

questioned it. I shall never forget that dreadful ordeal—never forget the voice of the dead falling on my mortal ears! It was the spirit of Jasper Green, the priest hunter. He had repented at the last moment, and was permitted to return and seek some one who would be brave enough to unearth his illgotten treasures and restore them to their rightful owners. I agreed to execute the mission on the following night. My visitant described how I was to proceed. A white paper was to be hanging on a branch of the tree in the wood of Derrymore, at whose roots I was to dig. First, I was to find a silver ball. Then the mould was to become looser in texture, and there was to be no labour in digging. But I was warned of the endeavours the arch-fiend was to make to frighten me away. If I failed, I was doomed to a life of misery and poverty.

“Fear not,” said my ghostly companion, “for I will be near to guard you from your adversaries.”

As I heard this, my heart grew glad at the thought of huming Jasper Green’s treasures. Why should I hand them over to anyone? The wealth I coveted was now almost within my grasp. At the appointed time I sought the wood, observed the paper, and proceeded to dig at the roots of the tree thus indicated. I soon found the silver ball. But my nerves were strung. I was encompassed with forms of dread. Lightning flashed around me. The earth quaked beneath me. Horrible shapes, which even now I dare not describe, surrounded me on every side. My spirits were overawed, and I fell prostrate in a death-like swoon. When I awoke at dawn I found myself on the green turf, and I could discern no trace of the spot where I had worked on the preceding night; but in my hand was the silver ball, which I have never since allowed out of my possession and have always borne about my person. As was foretold to me, I have lived ever since in misery and poverty. Emmeline Dillon never cast a second thought upon me, and married a gentleman in her own sphere of life. I am haunted night and day with visions of my youth. This morning, while it was bright and calm, I ventured to gaze at the reflection of my countenance in the pool in yonder valley. But whose face did I see? Not mine own, but that of the ill-fated recluse who has been lying in his unhallowed grave for more than four score years.

Conor Stanton ceased speaking. Suddenly thereafter there was a lull in the storm outside. Silence reigned supreme. If actuated by a sudden impulse Stanton drew forth the silver ball for the inspection of his comrades. He held it loosely in the muzzle of the gun, which was kept in a perpendicular position by the sleeping young man. It slipped from his fingers and dropped down the barrel with a sharp click. At the same time the sharp rattle was heard to come from the

The watchers immediately arose and recited a hymn in honour of the Nativity; this concluded they resumed their seats and proceeded to commemorate the great festival of Christendom by passing a flowing bowl of usquebaugh. Then Shawn Kelly commenced as follows:—

I have listened with intense interest to the various narratives with which you have beguiled the tedious hours, and I am firmly convinced that some supernatural power has drawn us together to-night for the evolution of a mystery which is still guarded by the avenging Fates. Methinks you have, each in turn, wrought out a part of the chain of destiny, and it now devolves upon me to supply the connecting links. Mine, like its predecessors, is a tale of a sorrow. Though born to poverty my aspirations were as far above my humble circumstances as the meridian sun is above this lowly earth. Even when quite a boy I often wandered dreamfully across the broad moor that skirted my humble homestead, and gloated upon the beauties of nature; to me the song of the lark was a tuneful hymn of praise to the Creator of the universe, and the murmur of the bee as it droned amongst the flowers repeated some mystery which it was not given to man to know. My widowed mother placed me under the tuition of a hedge-schoolmaster, who soon taught me to read intelligently, an acquirement which has given me the only lasting pleasure I could extract from life. At the age of fifteen I was apprenticed to a weaver named Gorman, the very man who supplanted Conor Stanton in the affections of Norah Clery. The unexpected devaluation of a newly-established banking company, that offered a place of security and large interest for his money, soon reduced him to a level with the poorest of his neighbours, and obliged him to earn an humble livelihood by means of the trade he had learned in his youth. After spending about two years in his employment an incident occurred which had the effect of sending me forth on one of the most remarkable errands that ever fell to the lot of mortal man to accomplish.

One night, about the beginning of summer, after Gorman and his wife had retired to bed, I felt a strong desire to read a favourite volume, so lighting a rush candle I took down the book from a shelf and was soon absorbed in its perusal. It might be about midnight when a hasty step came to the door, and before I had time to extinguish the light, the latch was raised and a man rushed into my presence in a state of intense excitement.

“Show me a hiding-place, boy,” he blurted out, “quick, lad, quick—the constables are at my heels.”

Almost overcome with terror I pointed to a large empty churn that stood in a corner of the kitchen; he understood my gesture and jumped into it, commanding me in the same dictatorial tone to put on the lid. I had scarcely done his bidding when two

hastily surveying the apartment, asked me where the man they had been pursuing was concealed. I affected not to understand their questioning, but their noisy importunities soon brought the master of the house upon the scene, and he in turn questioned the constables as to the meaning of their presence in his quiet abode at that unseasonable hour of the night.

"I think you know our business very well," replied the principal officer with a sneer. "We pursued the notorious outlaw Cahal Roe, to the door of your house, and this spawn (pointing to me) refuses to tell us where he is concealed."

"Search my house," rejoined the now terrified weaver, "search my house and if you find him in it I will, abide the consequences."

The other constable took hold of the candle and searched all the apartments, but, as usual in such cases, overlooked the vessel that appeared brimful of milk, hence they were forced to admit he was not on the premises.

"I could have sworn," said the officer, as they prepared to depart, "that I saw him enter the door as we topped the hill yonder; in any case it will not serve you to have a light burning in your house at this advanced hour."

When they were gone the old weaver poured out the vials of his wrath on my devoted head.

"I always told you that you were born for the gallows," he hissed through his clenched teeth, "but I did not think you would bring honest folk along with you; however, I'll be even with you in the morning, if I live so long."

He seized my book and candle and, without further ceremony tossed them into the burning embers, then with a bitter curse on his lips he retired to his room. The moment he closed the door behind him the wily fugitive left his hiding place, and advancing cautiously to the kitchen door peered out to see that the coast was clear; having satisfied himself on this point he turned in for a moment to bid me "good night," adding a hope, in which I did not participate, that we might meet again; then with a light step he bounded forward and made good his escape.

I fear I cannot accurately describe the state of my feeling when left alone; the shock I experienced through the unexpected advent of the outlaw and his pursuers was counterbalanced by a wholesome dread of my master, whose methods of chastisement were certainly more ingenious than humane. For several hours I sat brooding over my unenviable position; then as the morning light peered in at the window I rose up with a fixed resolution in my mind. I would no longer submit to the grinding tyranny of an unsympathetic master. I would try my luck in the North of Ireland where trade was in a flourishing condition, and where I might hope to find the means of gratifying my intellectual

lection of books, that seemed somehow to understand and regret my departure, I shook off the trammels of servitude on the threshold and bent my steps towards the north.

The tidy village of Killucan was peacefully reposing in its bower of trees as I passed through it, and the sun's disc was just appearing above the horizon as I reached the quaintly-shaped hamlet of Raharney. But now a serious difficulty confronted me, for I knew not which road to choose, as I had reached the limit of my former excursions in this direction. After considerable delay over my perplexity, I abandoned every road and took a line of route due north. As I hastened onward the sheep and kine arose and shook their hides free from the heavy dew, the wild birds chattered noisily in the brakes, and soon the lords of creation began to emerge from the cottages, and the blue curling smoke ascended clear and defined from the chimneys of many a peaceful homestead. I never once abated my walk during the long, sultry day that followed, and when the cool evening at length arrived it found me far from any human habitation, in one of those fruitful wildernesses which cruel landlords so love to make. An ivy-clad ruin that had once been an abbey and which tradition averred was built by the renowned Gobhan Saer, afforded me the only shelter I could conveniently obtain; I entered it and stretched my tired frame on a bed of stones. I had eaten nothing during the day, nor did I feel the pangs of hunger just then, for all my vital powers were equally exhausted, but an indescribable loneliness took possession of my soul. A longing to be back again amongst the green lanes of Coralstown, to embrace my affectionate mother, who was, probably, just then breaking her heart in grief for her lost child; a desire to shake my old taskmaster by the hand and swear eternal fealty to him; such was the feeling that predominated. Soon my perception underwent a remarkable change, for lo! the ruined edifice assumed its pristine beauty of architecture, and a number of cowed monks stood around a catafalque, on which a dead cleric lay shrouded in gorgeous vestments. They chanted the *Dies Irae* in a mournful tone, and one by one walked around the bier with torches in their hands. I lay watching in breathless awe. The calmness and silence of night was succeeded by a furious storm. All of a sudden the voices were hushed, and the spectral monks looked about the sacred edifice in an anxious way as if expecting some one whom they feared. Presently I heard a mournful cry outside, like the wail of a young child in dire distress. My heart melted with sympathy, for I thought the lost child wanted to gain admittance from the storm that appeared to be raging around the monastery, hence I arose from my hard couch, unbolted one of the doors and peered into the darkness. The small figure of a child passed in carrying a little doll in its hands, and

a peal of mocking laughter rang through the building, and on looking round I was horrified to find the child transformed into a ferocious looking man, of immense stature, holding a gleaming dagger above his head. The monks fled precipitately by every means of exit, pursued by the mysterious being, who seemed intent on assassinating them, and, overcome by terror, I sank down on the floor in a swoon. When I awoke, the full moon was shedding a ghastly light through the ruined pile, and no living form, save a grisly owl that croaked impatiently at my intrusion, was visible. As I gazed around my strange resting place, I caught sight of a glittering object amongst the *debris* on the floor. At first I imagined it to be a snake, but considering this to be an impossibility, I summoned up sufficient courage to take hold of it, when it proved to be a dagger knife, such as I saw in the hand of the priest-hunter during my dream or vision. It is somewhat worthy of remark that though I felt almost paralysed with fright, nature soon yielded to fatigue, and I fell into a sound slumber, from which I did not awake till the sun was far above the horizon.

I soon prepared to depart, and as I had no money wherewith to purchase food, I thought it better to carry away the knife, which I might sell to anyone who would care to buy it. With a parting look at the grim abode that afforded me such an unpleasant night's repose, I resumed my journey, and after wandering through fields for a considerable time, I reached a small river, whose smooth banks offered an easier path than the toilsome route I had been traversing. On and on I went, at every step almost ready to sink down from sheer exhaustion, when at last I had the good fortune to descry a fisherman at a bend of the stream just ahead of me. He proved to be a gentleman endowed with hospitable feelings, for when I had made him acquainted with my miserable condition, he hastened to supply me with eatables sufficient to assuage the pangs of hunger. It did not take me long to discover that he had been imbibing a little too freely from his brandy flask, nevertheless I decided on presenting him with the knife in return for his generous aid. After examining it for a moment, he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Tell me where you found this weapon, youngster," he articulated, in a voice peculiar to inebriates, "for I think I saw it before."

"In a ruined abbey, many miles away to the south," I replied.

"I do not misbelieve you," he replied "for it was there I lost it, and, strange enough, it was there it was first presented to me. It was a present from my uncle, Jasper Greene, of happy memory, when he had no further use for it himself, and it often stood my friend when the crafty Jacobites—curses on them—attempted

forward, for I see you are a lucky clown, and there is honesty in your face, so I conclude the business is settled. Just take a swill out of this flask, and drink to the immortal memory of Jasper Greene. Well done, young squire; there, take up that basket and net, and walk behind me, for fear your sallow face would scare the trout. I'll try my luck further up."

I do not wish to weary you by going into trifling details, enough to say I there and then agreed to serve my newly found master for the rest of my days. "Days," did I say? Alas! his days on earth were numbered, and in a few short hours I was fated to witness a deed of darkness that has never faded from my memory during all the weary years that have come and gone since then. But let me not anticipate.

The sun had disappeared in the west when my master (whose name I have never known) bethought him of winding up his line: The hours had slipped by unnoted, and when he desisted from his sport he found himself incapable of retracing his steps to the nearest village. I felt much concerned for him in his unfortunate plight, and advised him to seek refuge for the night in the first cabin we should meet with. To this proposal he consented, and after traversing a furze-covered marsh for some distance we arrived at a miserable hut almost concealed by a high bank of moor. A shrivelled old hag was the only occupant, and to our demand for lodging she gave a stern refusal. I politely informed her that my master was fatigued with walking and that he was in a position to reward her liberally for her hospitality. The greed for money soon overcoming her scruples, she conducted the strange gentleman to a small apartment at the rere of the kitchen, where he was soon fast asleep, as I could understand from his long-drawn snores. I threw myself on a broad form near the fireplace, but despite all my efforts I could not court the repose I stood so much in need of; my eyes continually followed the old dame as she moped about the apartment, and a curious sensation that some dreadful tragedy was impending haunted my mind and tortured my soul with a nameless terror. It might be about midnight when the *vanithee*, who had been watching at the kitchen door for some purpose of her own, rushed to where I was lying and commanded me to hide myself beneath the form without a moment's delay. Without questioning her meaning I instantly obeyed, and had scarcely done so when three men rushed into the cabin and seated themselves around the fire.

"Our's was ill luck to-night," said one of them, addressing the old crone. "Blood on it, we could not pick up a single sheep, but we'll make sure to-morrow night. Get me some boiled meat and bread for I mean to take a long sleep."

tokening his weariness even in his slumbers. On hearing it, the trio jumped to their feet simultaneously, and confronted the now trembling dame with scowling looks.

"Who is this you have concealed, *lagher-a-dhou*? said the elder of the three, as he lit a candle and stood in front of the room door, "speak truthfully, woman, or the ravens will wake you!"

"Spare my life, Cahal Roe," exclaimed the miserable old creature, falling on her knees, "for I never deceived you yet. It is a gentleman that lost his way on the moor, and would not be put off stopping for the night."

"Ay, ay," observed the outlaw, as he chuckled with fiendish delight, "it is not easy to cage a bird of that colour, but we'll see what we can make of his feathers now that we've got him. Come on boys."

The desperate ruffians peered cautiously in at the door of the apartment where the gentleman was stretched in helpless slumber. I tried to call out so as to alarm him, but fear stifled every sound I attempted to make. Soon they rushed in like bloodthirsty tigers upon their prey. There was a heavy trampling of feet, followed by a gurgling sound for a few moments, then another which I dare not describe—it was blood falling into some vessel—and before I had time to think of saving my own life by flight, the murderers emerged from the room, bearing the lifeless form of the first generous friend I had met in all my weary wanderings. There was a less audible trampling of feet outside, and a subdued murmur of voices, then one of them returned to the kitchen for a spade. He groped around for it, cursed the old hag for mislaying the tools, and at last—oh, that moment!—he thrust his hand under the form, and as suddenly withdrew it with an oath, that shook the accursed hovel. I was doomed—doomed to die a horrible death, away from home and those that loved me. Rudely I was dragged from my hiding place. The candle quenched; it was lit again. The other desperadoes having rushed into the hut to aid their companion, now stood around with scowling looks.

"A basin and a knife!" demanded the chief, in a hoarse whisper. His order was obeyed. The knife was still reeking with blood, but I had sufficient reason left me to note that it was the ill-omened one I found in the ruined abbey.

"Now, my young spy, you can follow your master."

He extended his arm to strike the fatal blow,

Even in that supreme moment, when death in its most dreadful form appeared inevitable, my heart rebounded with a throb of hope, for in the murderer who stood brandishing the dagger above my devoted head, I recognised the man whom I had saved

without a mighty effort of will-power that my tongue regained its faculty.

"Cahal Roe," I said, amidst pauses to gasp my breath, "it was not thus I treated you two nights ago, when your life was in peril."

"And who in the devil's name are you?" he asked, stooping down till I could feel his hot breath on my face. "High hanging to me," he vociferated, "if it's not the young knave who saved my bacon in the weaver's churn! Well, my lad, there is honour among thieves, and if you tell us honestly who the old cove is that over-slept himself and what brought you here, you will be let off with a caution; ha, ha!"

I told the little I knew briefly and candidly; but when I mentioned that the only clue I could give regarding the personality of the strange gentleman was the one in connection with the identification of the dagger, he gave a start of surprise.

"Bad fortune to me!" he exclaimed, holding the gory weapon aloft, "I should have known the old family-piece at first sight if the devil did not blind me, for I was the very man that gave it to him in the old abbey when my dearly beloved sire, Jasper Greene, found he had no further use for it in this life."

"But you are not going to let the young spawn go and blab on us, are you?" interposed one of his associates.

"My life is just as precious as yours," retorted the outlaw fiercely, "and I know the kind of neighbour to trust. Here is a tenpenny, my lad, so clear out at once, and do not cross my path again lest either of us might regret it."

He conducted me to the door, or perhaps a little beyond it, and bidding me, sarcastically, to follow the moon, left me to find my way across the moory wilderness as best I could. My first act on finding myself alone was to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for rescuing me out of the den of iniquity from which I had just escaped, through the interposition of His divine power. I tried to reason myself into the belief that I was but fulfilling some horrible dream such as I often experienced in my own quiet hamlet; but the hoarse cry of the bittern as it circled around the broad expanse of bog, and the incessant screaming of the plovers in the outlying marshes helped to dispel this temporary illusion. As though to add to my misery a bat persisted in accompanying me for miles, and as I watched its silent but regular gyrations I could not dispel the idea that it was the soul of the murdered man taking a last farewell of earth. At first I was obliged to walk very slowly on account of the quagmires that surged beneath my feet almost at every step; however, I tried to gather consolation from the hope that Cahal Roe and his evil companions would

the moorland far behind me, but feeling exhausted with the unusual exertion, I had been obliged to make I look around for some place where I might rest in security for a few hours. A deserted cowshed answered my purpose well enough and in this miserable hovel, open to all the winds of heaven, I extended my wearied limbs with a sigh of relief; nor was I long in my recumbent position until death's gentle sister, balmy sleep, lulled my senses into forgetfulness of my miseries. I felt cold and stiff when I awoke, nevertheless I deemed it better to push on some miles further from the scene of last night's tragedy, for my excited imagination pictured constables as well as murderers searching for my trail. I knew by the position of the sun that it should be about noon, and this fact reminded me that I had not eaten anything since the day previous; nor indeed, that I felt any acute pangs of hunger, for the hardships I had endured since I left my native place, and perhaps a certain feeling of thankfulness for being allowed to exist deadened the cravings of appetite. I can form no approximate idea of how far I travelled during the remainder of that day. Weak in body and bewildered in mind—so bewildered, indeed, that I often fancied I heard the cry of the murdered man appealing for aid and mercy, and felt the snake-like fingers of the murderer tighten upon my throat, it is still a wonder to me how I bore up; how I did not lie down and die, a stranger in the midst of my own people. The farm-houses were few and far between, and one or two of them I begged for a morsel of food, and felt thankful for the dry crusts of bread that were doled out to me though they hardly compensated me for the bites which the yard dogs extracted from my tender flesh. That night I crept into a shed which was tenanted by a number of sheep and lambs, and being utterly fatigued slept soundly till sunrise. Once more I set forward, devouring my last crust as I limped along, but as my route lay through a wild and unfrequented glen, I considered it prudent to make some inquiries at a little hut that stood some distance from the road. As I entered the door I noticed an old woman stooping over a few embers on the hearth, apparently engaged in the preparation of some food. Her face was thin and shrivelled, and taken altogether, her deformity was so great that she scarcely appeared to be a human creature. I would have retreated instantly were she not aware of my presence.

“You have come to inquire your way, Shawn?” she observed without turning her head to look at me.

I started at the mention of my name, for how could this untutored *colliagh* divine it, or the secret of my visit? Before I had time to recover from my surprise, however, she hobbled

"You have met with trouble, *ma bougal*," she observed in the harsh grating voice with which she greeted me on my entrance, and there is worse trouble in store for you, but," she continued—and her features assumed a hideous grin—"you must cross my hand with the bit of silver you have in your pocket before I can tell you any more."

Mechanically I thrust my hand into my pocket and drew forth the tenpenny which the robber had given me. She clutched at it excitedly and hid it away in her bosom while I remained motionless and spellbound.

"Now," she went on, and I trembled in every limb as the relative sybil unfolded my fate, "you must keep up your courage till you are free from the thrall that is on you. The demon ogger that was withheld from drinking your young blood may bite it before the sun goes down, and the *colleen* that leaves you for one less worthy will embrace you with the arms of death. You gave protection to one who made you an outcast, but you will work his ruin." Strong convulsions overpowered her as she uttered the words, and I felt her snake-like fingers tightening on my wrist.

I could bear the horrible ordeal no longer, so with a wild cry, I broke from her grasp and fled—on, on! I cared not whither provided I could escape from that unhallowed den, and the locking sybil who tenanted it.

I do not know what course I took or what difficulties I encountered as I stumbled along; but towards midday I found myself on the margin of a river which was far too wide and deep for me to attempt fording it. As I stood gazing up and down the stream my attention was arrested by a shout which seemed to come from the opposite side. On looking in that direction I descried a man with a gleaming dagger in his hand running at full speed to the point where I was standing hotly pursued by two constables, who were so close upon his track that they sometimes tried to grapple with him. On he came to the very brink of the river, then rising clear from the margin bounded across with the agility of a deer; but the bank being undermined by the action of the water at the spot where he happened to alight suddenly broke beneath his feet, and he was thrown on his back into the strong current of the stream. I saw there was not a moment to lose if I wished to save him, so extending a stick to him which he missed several times, he at last caught hold of it and I drew him to the bank.

"Hold him fast," shouted the constables who stood panting on the opposite side, "till we get over by the bridge."

The outlaw—oh, God! it was Cahal Roe!—on regaining his foothold soon got clear of the water, but in plunging out his foot slipped and he fell heavily across me, the point of the dagger

then a deadly stupor grew upon me, and I saw or heard no more.

When again I awoke to consciousness I was agreeably surprised at seeing myself occupying a comfortable bedroom in what I rightly conjectured to be a farm-house of the better class. Strange but kindly faces were bending over my couch as I raised myself feebly on my elbows and tried to recollect how it was I came there.

"He is all right now," I heard some one say—I suppose it was the doctor—"though the poor lad had a very narrow escape, half an inch either way and the dagger would have reached his heart; in any case it is certain he must have been inured to hardship, else he would have succumbed to the fever."

The dagger! What a thrill of horror agitated my frame at the bare mention of the word, and how suddenly my mind reverted to the exciting scenes I had witnessed since I left home. I sank back heavily on my pillow and closed my eyes as though I would fain shut out the dread pictures which my memory brought up, and my kind attendants thinking I was about to slumber stole silently from the room. But I could not endure to be left alone, besides I felt a pardonable curiosity to know how they came to take such an interest in me, so after a little time I framed the excuse of calling for a drink. A fair young girl with flaxen hair and deep blue eyes soon came in bearing a cup of whey, which she said the doctor ordered me to take whenever I felt thirsty. She expressed a hope that my health would much improved.

"Why, I am almost well enough," I replied, "thanks to your kindness. But you must tell me how I was brought here yesterday; all I know is that I felt the night to be unusually long."

"My dear boy," she said, taking my hand in hers, and stroking back the hair from my burning brow, "the doctor says you are not to agitate yourself by talking until you are stronger, but still I think it is no harm to make you acquainted with what has happened to you. After you were wounded at the river the police carried you to this house which was the nearest, and the inquiry that followed they swore that they saw you endeavouring to hold down the outlaw when you were stabbed. Lady Reynolds, who is very humane and charitable, paid all the expenses attending your illness, and you are to wait upon her when you are quite recovered. It is just a fortnight since the commencement, and during that time your life was in jeopardy, the fever never left you night or day; indeed, I was awfully afraid myself you raved so much about robbers and murderers."

"You were not frightened at the idea of death, I suppose," I stole a glance at my fair attendant as I put the question.

"Yes," she answered, averting her head a little, to hide her agitation which her voice betrayed. "I never saw a man more

the bare mention of death chills me to the marrow. In any case I would not like that you would die."

"Why?"

"I—I cannot explain myself properly,"—she blushed slightly and continued—"perhaps it is because my father remarked that my little brother that was drowned when I was an infant, would have resembled you had he been spared."

"You are an only child, I suppose?"

"Yes; I know not the love of brother or sister; and now you must not worry yourself by talking any more, it might make you ill."

"Very well, tell your parents that I feel grateful for all their goodness to me, and that I will never cease to pray for your welfare. You won't forget to come and talk to me as often as you can. But stay, I do not think you told me your name."

"Alice Noonan, and now good bye."

She pressed my hand gently, and with a winning sweetness, such as might irradiate the countenance of an angel, she disappeared from my presence. For a little time I felt unspeakably happy, but, as after events too truly verified, it was but the transient brightness that precedes the fatal storm. Sometimes the kind old farmer and his wife would step in to see how I was progressing, and converse with me in such soothing terms—so ethetically, in fact—that tears of gratitude often filled my eyes, and I would find it difficult to hide my emotion. On such occasions my host would ply me with questions relating to my former state of life, and even went so far as to assert that we were probably kinsmen, for his mother's maiden name was Kenny, and she came originally from Westmeath. When I was able to move about I exercised myself by assisting him on the farm, though I felt so weak from loss of blood that I could not engage in any heavy work. Meanwhile, the hours flew by serenely enough for one that was tasting the first simple pleasures that brightened his life; it was something to meet with sympathy, unexpected, and perhaps, undeserved; to revel in the summer afternoons amidst flowers and ferns and blooming groves; to find time for the reading of favourite books, and what I enjoyed much more, perhaps—though at the time I scarcely understood its influence—to live in the society of a pure and unsophisticated maiden. I was sufficiently recovered from my illness when midsummer-day came on, and as Lady Reynolds (who had been travelling for a week or two) was expected to arrive the next day, I felt that I should soon have to part with my hospitable friends, for my duty towards my noble benefactress was imperative and would brook no delay. In the evening a bonfire was lighted on the roadside near the farm house, and as Alice

it would be ungentlemanly in me to offer an objection, I consented to go, and in less than half-an-hour we found ourselves standing in the midst of a roistering crowd of both sexes, a crackling bonfire throwing up its ruddy flames at one side of the narrow road and a jolly Northern piper discoursing sweet music at a convenient distance. A young lad, who exhibited all the unblushing airs of a rustic swell, stepped forward and asked Alice to be his partner in the dance. She gave a too-willing assent, and when the dance was over suffered him to lead her to a seat where the musician's shrill pipes effectually drowned their conversation. As no suspicion of a secret attachment between the youthful pair—neither of them appearing to be seventeen years of age—crossed my mind at the time, I thought it wiser not to pay any heed to the matter, but when the Adonis persisted in seeing her to her father's gate I considered it my bounden duty to interfere, though why or wherefore I could not very well explain at the time—it might be on moral grounds, it might be owing to a slight pang of jealousy that rankled in my heart.

"Alice," I remarked, with unwonted severity, "your conduct this evening is not what it ought to be; there is no necessity for this young man accompanying you so far."

"Oh, he is going back now," she answered in guileless simplicity. "Dermot—Good night."

"Good night, Alice," he replied. "Remember what is before us to-morrow night, or never."

"Oh, Dermot! something tells me not to go." She hastened back and grasped both his hands.

"Nonsense. You are always fretting about what never happens. If old Vaura shows her face to-morrow evening it is token that I am prepared. Good night."

The boy turned away quickly and was soon lost to view in the deepening twilight. Alice watched him till he was out of sight, then with a heavy sigh she unbolted the gate, and we both passed down the yard to her father's door without exchanging another word.

On the following morning I was up and at work before the sun emerged above the eastern horizon. A foreboding of some impending calamity—an undefinable feeling of uneasiness which I could not account for—deprived me of the repose which nature claimed; hence I longed for the approach of daylight which I could divert my mind by engaging in manual labour. After breakfast the old farmer set out for the nearest market town to transact some important business with the agent of the property, and I was left almost at my own free will during the remainder of the day. At dinner Alice was not to be seen, but her mother, noticing my look of inquiry, excused her absence by stating that

sultry afternoon you may readily surmise. Yes, Alice Noonan was the one object that filled my mind, even though I knew her friendship was all I could claim. And how long was I to share her sisterly affection? Did not her accepted lover—how I envied, perhaps hated him just then—did he not hint at some mysterious occurrence that was to take place this very night? To such a pitch of excitement was I worked by brooding over these thoughts that I threw down the implement I was using and walked rapidly in the direction of the house, determined to prevent at all hazards an elopement which to my heated imagination appeared fraught with direst evils for one or both. Alice was standing at the yard gate when I reached it, an anxious look in her mild blue eyes.

“Have you seen her, Shawn?” she asked in a low voice before I had time to accost her.

“Seen her—whom do you mean, Alice?”

“The hag—old Vaura!” she replied in a hoarse whisper. “She came to the door for alms, and you know what Dermot remarked to me last night.”

“Yes, Alice, and I did not comment upon it for fear you would mistake my meaning. But now I implore you not to be misled by this foolish boy, if, indeed, he be not too clever for his years.”

“You have no right to suspect Dermot,” she observed, “for I know him since he was a child and I never could find fault with him; but my father cannot bear the sight of him because he is nobly endeavouring to support a bed-ridden mother and a few helpless sisters on his little holding which lies next to ours.” She tossed her little head with honest indignation as she said this.

“But I—I would not like that you would leave your home; there is no need for such haste; besides, your parents have the first claim upon your affections.”

“You know nothing of our little plans,” she said, endeavouring to form a smile to her lips, “besides,” she added, with an involuntary shudder, “there is something prompting me to fly with Dermot since I saw old Vaura this evening.” She paused for a few moments then, her eyes welling with tears. She added: “For the sake of the friendship you bear me, Shaun, I implore you not to divulge the secret to my parents till I am gone.”

A heavy sob impeded her further expression, and, as on the previous evening, we turned towards the house in silence, both of us too much occupied with distressing thoughts to resume the conversation.

It was late when the master returned home, but he appeared to be in a very happy frame of mind, for the land agent was

managed farms around would be consolidated before long, and then Mr Noonan could live like a gentleman.

"Do you know but, Shaun," he remarked, as we sat at the supper-table, "Lady Reynolds' agent was inquiring about you to-day (which was very remarkable, for people say he is a better blooded gentleman than she is a lady) and I told him that if it was her ladyship's pleasure I would adopt you as my own son and then, of course, Alice would have a brother—ha, ha, ha. See how she blushes now. Well, Alice *achorra*, just brew us a measure of nice strong punch till we toast all our healths and whatever little prosperity is before us in this life."

Alice complied with her father's request, but neither of her parents knew why her fair hands trembled as she tried to perform the task.

"Why, Alice," remarked the farmer, "you are spilling the liquor, and it is not to be found in every well, you know; but maybe there is enough and to spare. Now, Shaun (turning towards me) I heard you lilting a song in the fields yesterday and you will make us all happy by singing a few staves of it just now. Come now, good lad." He replenished the measure with his own hand as he spoke, and leaned back in his chair in quiet expectancy.

I would rather not sing at the time, but as I did not care to offend my kind host by refusing I sang part of an old melody that somehow recurred to my mind several times during the day. The words were English, and ran as follows:—

Early, early one morning Willie Leonard arose,
And straight to his comrade's bed-chamber he goes,
Saying "Arise, loyal comrade, let nobody know,
The morning is fine, and a-bathing we'll go."

They walked down along till they came to a lane
Where they were o'ertaken by the keeper of game,
Who said "Turn back, boys, and don't venture in,
For there's death and cold water in the lake of Shee-lyn!"

Willie stripped off his clothes and he swam the lake round.
He swam towards the island, but ne'er reached dry ground.
He said "Loyal comrade, I feel very weak:"
And these were the last words young Willie did speak.

Early, early next morning his sister arose,
And quick to her mother's bed-chamber she goes,
Saying "Mother, I have had a most sorrowful dream—
Willie's corpse is afloat on Shee-lyn's parting stream!"

On the day of the funeral it was a grand sight
To see four-and-twenty young men all banded in white.
They carried him on their shoulders and they laid him in the clay
Then "adieu Willie Leonard," and all marched away.

An agonising sob broke upon my ear as I concluded the song.

weeping bitterly with her face concealed behind her apron. Her father started to his feet in wonderment and alarm.

"Why, what on earth is the matter with the girl?" he cried, as he looked uneasily from the mother to me for an explanation.

Her mother was bending over her in an attitude of true maternal kindness.

"It is the headache that is troubling her, Bartle," she observed; "the poor child did not eat a morsel of food the whole day."

"Well, she ought to be in her bed, then," remarked the farmer, assuming an unconcerned tone; "it is almost ten o'clock, and time for honest folk to seek repose."

He stood up, and seizing a lighted candle strode off to his bedchamber with the air of a man who wishes to edify by good example as well as precept.

"Good night, father," said Alice, as he disappeared behind a wooden partition that served as a hallway.

"Good night, Alice. I hope you will be well enough when I see you in the morning."

Poor Alice! her only response was a series of broken sobs which she vainly tried to suppress as she hastened from the apartment.

The night was unusually calm and sultry, and for a considerable time I lay awake pondering over what I had heard and seen, and asking over and over again how it was I could feel so strongly attracted towards a girl whose tenderest affections were lavished upon another, and that other—my secret rival—possessed of no superior qualifications, physically or mentally, that would entitle him to the claim. Ah, surely the green-eyed monster, Jealousy, was gnawing the vitals of my heart! A gentle tap at my bedroom door dispelled my unpleasant reverie. I knew the familiar knock—it was Alice, come to bid me a last good-bye.

"Oh, Shaun, Shaun," she said, "how I feel the sorrow of this parting! how my parents will mourn for me when they find me gone. How the poor dumb creatures whom I have fed with my hands will miss their dear Alice to-morrow and next day. Even the little flowers in the garden will droop when I am not there to tend them."

I tried to speak—to forbid her departure under threat of alarming her parents—but a choking sensation in my throat forced back the words and I remained silent.

"Shaun," she resumed, "do not blame me for going with Dermot. He is the noblest fellow in the world, and would risk his life for my sake; besides everything will be settled in a little time when the storm blows over, and then I can come back to live here again; won't that be happiness?"

soul with the reflection that what she proposed doing was a crime in the sight of Heaven? I could not find it in my nature to act so rough a part.

"Alice," I said at length, "I am sorry you did not allow yourself sufficient time to consider the step you are about to take; how even the shortest absence of a member of a family from home will bring a change that time will not restore. But I know well it is no small inducement has caused you to leave your home, your parents, and even me ——"

"Oh, say no more," she cried in piteous accents, "or you will drive me to despair. There! the cock is crowing for midnight, and I know that Dermot is waiting for me. Good bye and mind my poor parents."

She pressed my hand tenderly between her own and moved towards the door; then as if actuated by some strange impulse she turned back.

"I have nothing to give you in remembrance of me but this," she said, taking off her Gospel and placing it in my hand. "May it shield and guard you from all harm!"

Before I had time to shape a reply, even to utter one word of thanks, she was gone—gone for ever!

Even while her receding footsteps could be heard, a form—a shadow—passed between me and the window. I knew instinctively it was the grim phantom—DEATH; his victim could not be far off.

What thoughts were mine after her departure I know not—my feelings had been worked up to a high pitch of excitement, and now that the crisis was over I soon lapsed into that dreamy state that gradually draws from the eternal world. I was awakened by a strange rumbling noise. A glance towards the window of my room assured me it was broad daylight, but before I had time to withdraw my gaze a weird flash of lightning penetrated the apartment, quickly followed by a roll of thunder that shook the foundations of the dwelling. I sat up in bed trembling violently, and strained my ears to take in every sound. The rain was falling heavily outside, and the wind was moaning through the trees. As I listened to the warring elements the farmyard cock dropped from his roost above the kitchen door, and after a preliminary clap of his wings commenced to crow with unusual vehemence. "Alice—something dreadful has happened her! I thought, and I shuddered at the very idea. Ah! did not the 'life-shiver' agitate her tender frame on the previous evening, while a death-bell tinkled in my ears. Hark! what sound was that? A horseman—I could hear the iron-shod hooves crunching the gravel—rode up to the door and without a moment's pause knocked loudly for admittance.

"Who's there?" demanded the old farmer, drowsily, as though half awake.

"Is your daughter at home, do you know?"

"My daughter! For God's sake don't insist she's not asleep at this hour. Wait."

The old man hastily left his couch and rushed through several apartments making the roof-tree resound with the name of "Alice," while his spouse, with her womanly instinct, set up a wail that smote on my hearing more terribly than the loudest peal of thunder.

"I am very sorry for your misfortune, but I fear you will search in vain," said the horseman, "for last night your daughter and her young lover were caught in the storm while crossing the lake, and their bodies were found on the strand this morning." Having discharged his disagreeable message in this one brief sentence, the horseman rode away, and with him all human hope appeared to abandon that house of mourning. Miserable wretch that I was I persistently denied having any knowledge of the elopement, and exerted all my power to console the unhappy parents, but without avail; their sorrow was to be life-enduring. An hour later a group of peasants approached the house bearing the lifeless body of the girl still habited in her holiday attire. I bent over the dripping form, and with trembling hands pushed back the golden tresses from her brow. Calm and fair as a marble statue she lay there dead—dead in all her youth and beauty! To me, my friends, it was a day of bitter sorrow, but a greater trial was still before me.

It is scarcely necessary to enter into any details respecting the wake and funeral of Alice Noonau, for these solemn customs are carried out on the same principles throughout the length and breadth of our land. In Westmeath and Waterford, in Tyrone and Galway the same formalities are gone through. The body of the deceased girl was laid out in the barn, which was clean swept, and fitted up for the occasion. Her father, judging by his demeanour, appeared to be very sensible of his loss, for, whenever a friend or neighbour entered the apartment he arose from his seat at the head of the wake-board (which he occupied the whole time, divested of coat and hat) and leading the newcomer to the side of the table, would say in heartrending accents, "There is all that is left of my darling Alice!" The mother, on the contrary, appeared habited in holiday attire, and bestowed all her attention on her guests, whom she treated to a plentiful supply of refreshments. But it was evident her reasoning faculties were stultified by her great sorrow, for no word of regret passed her lips, and whenever she referred to Alice—which was frequent enough—she represented her in the position of a bride enjoying her wedding-day in Paradise.

all through, but don't you see how well off they are in the end, Glory be to God!"

On the evening of the third day the earthly remains of Alice Noonan were placed upon the bier and carried by the young maidens of the parish to the family burying-ground (which in this instance happened to be an island in the lake where she yielded up her young life), preceded by a clergyman, reciting prayers for the dead, and followed by a large procession of people of both sexes, conspicuous amongst whom were the *keeners*, whose mournful wails added considerably to the melancholy character of the scene. "Old Vaura is the best *keener*," I heard some one say. I glanced towards the person indicated, and beheld the old sibyl who foretold my misfortunes in the way-side cabin. I instantly withdrew my gaze, for her snake-like eyes were fastened upon me: doubtless the cup of my sorrows was not yet filled. It was thought that Alice and her betrothed would be interred in the same grave, united as they were in life and in death, but her father could not be reconciled to the proposal, the bare suggestion being sufficient to convert his grief into rage.

"I hated him—the murderer of my child!—the destroyer of my happiness!—I hated him in life," he would exclaim; "I abhor him in death; and, though I refrain from cursing him now, I hope the wide river will roll between them on the last day."

It was a dreadful expression—repeated more than once—un-Christian and perhaps un-Irish; but he was a man of strong passions and too much wedded to nature; the garden of his soul was overgrown with weeds—education was wanting to stamp out the prejudices inspired by ignorance. When the funeral arrived at the edge of the lake the coffin was placed in a small boat rowed by two men, and, at the request of her father, I accompanied Alice's remains to the place of interment in order to recite the funeral psalm over her grave, but no one else—no fourth person—according to custom, was permitted to accompany them.

I shall not venture to describe the state of my feelings as I saw the coffin with its wreaths of flowers—symbolical of youth and innocence—lowered into the grave. I was too young at the time to seek consolation in philosophy—I thought not of that life beyond the grave—hence I fled from the spot and hid myself in an open vault littered with human bones, rather than bear the trying ordeal. Even there I closed my ears lest I might hear the heavy clay—the humid dust of departed generations—falling, closing around the inanimate body! For a while I lay wrapped in grief in that noisome cell, then a heavy stupor stole over me—induced doubtless by the fatigue I had endured

but when I awoke and groped my way to the surface the stars were glimmering in the sky. I called out loudly to the men who had accompanied me but no voice answered mine. I ran round the narrow limits of the island and realised to my intense horror that the boatmen failing to discover my hiding-place had taken their departure and left me to my fate. A thousand dreadful fancies floated through my mind. I bethought me of the ghouls that haunt the lonely churchyards to feast upon the dead. I threw myself upon the grave of my beloved Alice as though for protection or company, and bedewed the grassy mound with my tears; a selfish grief it was that rent my breast just then. I thought I heard some noise close behind me, but I dared not look around my fear was so intense. I had been gravely informed by Alice in one of our conversations that the island was tenanted by a monster—a griffin in fact—whose business it was to devour any person that remained on it after sunset (hence there was no need for watchers), and my excited imagination convinced me that the fiendish abortion had marked me for its prey. But little time was given me to indulge in this ghastly reflection. All of a sudden an unnatural light flashed around me, the next instant I was struggling in the grip of some powerful animal, its claws being firmly fixed in my throat. Fortunately for sanity of mind I was not left long in doubt as to the nature of my assailant for a coarse, human voice in unmistakable Northern accent hissed in my ear—"Don't try to resist, or you are a dead cove."

The thought that I was not about to be devoured by some fiendish monster—that a human being was near me—afforded me a temporary relief, and I mustered up sufficient courage to assure my captor that I was an inoffensive mortal whose only desire was to be anywhere out at that dismal island.

"I know how you came to be here," he observed sharply, "but you are in our way; however," he went on after a moment's reflection, "we may have use for you, so step aside and let us go to work. Here, boys, unstrap your tools."

Two men came forward at his bidding, their faces concealed by masks, and commenced removing the loose earth from the grave. Now and then the leader would flash the light of a shaded lamp upon their operations and urge them on to renewed exertions until at last their tools grated upon the coffin-lid; then there was a brief pause, followed by a hurried shuffling of hands and feet, a crash of broken boards, and—oh God!—some white object was hauled out of the grave! I looked on with stolid indifference—I saw and heard everything as in a dream—powerless to act, or speak, or even think. I was paralysed with horror. I was dimly conscious of being led away by one of the sacreligious crew; of sitting in a boat beside that limp form

that inanimate form along a bye-way of interminable length of travelling along tortuous bridle-paths and stumbling across fences, muffled oaths and curses assailing my ears almost every step; all this I accomplished without a murmur, without experiencing any physical weakness, for the spirit of Ali Noonan walked beside me throughout that awful journey. Yet we met again for a little while—met as lovers meet for the first time—and no rival stood between us. * * *

At length there came a halt; I was relieved of my burden and hustled through a doorway into a rude hovel where I was confronted by a savage-looking man who held a light in one hand and a gleaming dagger in the other.

"Strip the lad—strip him to the waist," I heard him say, but the words conveyed no meaning to my mind. In a moment my coat and vest was torn off.

"Hold! How came you by the wound on your breast?" demanded my would-be executioner as he lowered the light to my face. He touched the scar on my breast carelessly with the point of his dagger, the effect was like the sensation experienced by coming in contact with a venomous reptile. I became thoroughly conscious of my position.

"It was done by Cahal Roe," I articulated, after a desperate effort to regain my speech.

"The devil! You are the young lad that rescued me at the river, then. See here," he continued, turning to his companions, "we must spare this stripling's life, for he served me a good turn more than once."

"No, no," yelled the desperadoes, "he would blab on us, and you know soldiers are on our trail to-night. If you are not strong for it let some of us do the work!"

"Well, just a word or two with you, men, and I'll prove what he's made of."

Cahal Roe—for it was he—drew the rest of the gang aside and entered into a lengthy consultation with them; however, before they had time to arrive at any decision regarding my fate a loud knock came to the door, and a voice demanded it to be opened in the King's name. Instead of answering the summons several of the outlaws made for a small window that stood in the back wall of the cabin, but the leader intercepted their retreat.

"Back, you fools!" he cried; "let the youngster go first and be shot. It will give us a chance."

He seized me in his arms and hurled me through the open window as though I were a log. As I fell to the earth outside more than one bullet whizzed close to my head, but the darkness prevented the soldiers from taking proper aim. I knew the noise inside that the front door was forced in and I reason-

on the same scaffold with the red-handed marauders who evaded justice only too long, for at that time the law was very stringent against malefactors—indeed the shadow of a suspicion was enough to draw a man within the grip of Jack Ketch—and in the hand of a crown prosecutor my case was against me. These considerations left me no alternative—if I cared for life or honour I must fly. That I made good my escape there is sufficient proof in my being here to-night, but if I were to recount all I was fated to go through before I reached my native village the festival of Christmas would be numbered with those that have passed away. Ten days after the eventful night I have referred to I sighted the old town of Mullingar, which was to me what London is to the Saxon, or Mecca to the follower of Mahomet.

It was assize week and the finisher of the law was reaping a golden harvest. Curiosity led me to the place of execution. One culprit was dangling from the rope as a terror to all evil doers. His appearance was something appalling; his bloodshot eyeballs distended and wide open even in death; his swollen tongue protruding from his mouth, and his face contorted beyond recognition. As I stood gazing on the horrid spectacle one of the jailers approached me and tapping me on the shoulder asked me if I was willing to earn a crown. I answered in the affirmative for I did not care to offend the least of his Majesty's officials just then. He drew forth a parcel and told me to bear it safely to Harode Scully of Clonmore.

“It is a dagger that belonged to Cahal Roe—the gentleman you see dangling up there—and as it is a family heirloom he left it with me for transmission to his relative. You deliver it safely, boy, or old Nick will not be your best friend.”

I executed my errand punctually, for I felt rather in dread of the jailer's warning, and then directed my steps to the little cottage I once called *home*. Just as the grey old bridge appeared in view a small funeral party came up, and in accordance with the custom I turned back to accompany it a part of the way. As I did so my old master, Tom Gorman, stepped forward and, grasping me by the hand, remarked—“I am sorry for your loss, Shaun, but I hope she is better off to-day.”

I started at his words and divined their meaning without asking him a question. It was my mother's remains they were bearing to the grave! Alas, the old cot was no longer a home. Even while I lay weeping over the green sod that covered the one faithful being who had clung to me through good and ill—who cared to live only for my sake—the rapacious middleman, of whose class were the vilest exterminators this country produced—the middleman, I say, for the sake of a few feet of earth levelled my humble roof-tree to the ground and left me a home-

fated land may be as bright and prosperous as the past has been dark and wretched.

CONCLUSION.

As Shaun Kenny ceased speaking a low mournful wail, like the cry of a human being in great agony, broke upon the still night air—for the storm had been succeeded by a breathless calm that seemed in perfect harmony with place and hour. The cry was repeated several times at short intervals, and as it smote upon the listening ears of the watchers their hearts were filled with a nameless dread which it was vain to try to conceal from one another.

Conor Stanton alone appeared to be unaffected by the mysterious sounds, but it was apparent to his companions that his reasoning powers were in a very unsettled state.

“Hear her!” he cried, extending his arms towards the doorway, “hear the poor Banshee lamenting for some departing friend. Who knows but it may be one of ourselves? Look, look,” he added in still wilder accents, “there’s her death-light burning already!”

Despite his agitation—increased by the maniacal utterances—Kerin Duffy mustered sufficient courage to peer into the exterior darkness; but it was only for a moment. With a cry of horror he leaped to his feet and rushed across the apartment to where the young man was sleeping.

“Wake up—wake up, Bryan Scully,” he said in a suppressed voice, shaking him violently by the arm—“the resurrectionists are desecrating your father’s grave!”

The young man staggered to his feet, rubbed his eyes, and hastened to the door. A small, dim light glimmered in the corner of the churchyard—it appeared to be underneath the tombstone that rested above his father’s grave. Without a moment’s reflection he raised the gun to his shoulder and fired. There was a blinding flash, a loud report that awoke the echoes of the neighbouring woods, followed by an agonizing cry. Young Scully, muttering a dreadful imprecation, darted across the churchyard, and the old man awaited the result in trembling expectancy. The time of suspense was very brief, for soon another cry, more horrible than the last, reached their ears, rendering them almost powerless to move or speak. Conor Stanton was the first to take action. Rushing to the shed he seized a lantern that stood ready for use, and calling upon the others to follow him he made his way over the uneven surface to the spot whence the cries proceeded and groped about the tombstones chuckling to himself all the time.

“Heaven protect us!” ejaculated Duffy, as he stumbled against a dark object in his path, “here’s a dead man; a light—quick!”

was discovered lying upon his back beside his father's tombstone, a dagger buried to the hilt in his heart, and beside him was the lifeless body of his half-brother who was once known as Esther Downey's son. It afterwards transpired that the ill-fated imbecile was sojourning in the neighbourhood of Clonmore at the time of Garode Scully's death, and by some unaccountable means contrived to get possession of the fatal dagger. On his return home he was informed of his mother's death and burial, and though fatigued after his long journey he sought the churchyard at midnight to keep watch beside her grave. Little did he imagine that in doing so he was but fulfilling the stern decree of Fate which ordained that the last day of his race and generation was to terminate on that eventful Christmas Eve—that the dagger and the bullet, once cherished by his ruthless ancestor should be the instruments of annihilation set apart by Him who said "Vengeance is Mine!" and who "will visit the iniquities of fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generation."

* * * * *

Bright and beautiful arose the sun upon that Christmas morning. His genial rays penetrated into many a happy home—peace was on earth, and yet there were some to whom no peace was allotted. None, at least, for poor Conor Stanton, conjectures the sapient reader. Who can tell?

That morning he was found face upwards in the transparent pool which reflected his shadow on the previous day; he ended his life by committing suicide, and the semi-barbarous ordinances of his age consigned him to an unconsecrated grave at the nearest cross roads, with a stake driven through his breast!

Concerning the fate of the other characters who have figured in our tale little remains to be told. Duffy ended his life on the gallows. He was convicted of aiding some petty thief, though his part of the spoil did not amount to a florin; nevertheless "the law should take its course"—a tortuous one at all times; a barbarous one at the time of which we are treating.

Meehaul Ryan met with a different fate. A wealthy relative of his bequeathed him all his property when dying in distant Australia, and the idea of testing the happiness of riches in this world induced the foolish old man to embark on a long and perilous voyage, but he never reached the promised land, for while yet on mid-ocean he took ill and died, and his body was thrown overboard to make food for the sharks.

Of Shaun Kenny I do not care to speak; he continued to follow his humble avocation till death knocked at his door and claimed the web of life. Though rather eccentric in manner and filled with the visionary enthusiasm of the poet, he was possessed of considerable literary ability, and it was from certain do-

demise that this veracious history grew into existence. Should the reader ever find himself in that locality he can easily discover (quite adjacent to the cemetery) the humble cabin wherein were penned the rustic memoirs which have given to the world
THE DEAD-WATCHERS.



THE GHOST'S WARNING.

Bryan Maguire was the son of a prosperous farmer who resided within a short distance of the town of Moate. From early childhood his love for books predominated over all the allurements of his class; and his simple-minded parents, believing that they saw in his studious habits and subdued or melancholy demeanour, unmistakable proof that he was predestined for the sacred ministry, settled it quietly between themselves that Bryan should be sent to college, and accordingly he was packed off to a distant seminary where he was forced to undergo a course of study not at all to his liking; and when at the mature age of twenty-one he quitted it to enter the famous establishment of Maynooth, he felt inwardly convinced that he had no vocation for the priesthood, and that in offering himself as a candidate for orders he was complying with the will of his parents—not his own. On the day proceeding his intended departure he strolled over his father's extensive farm intent on bidding a final farewell to all the familiar scenes of his childhood. It was the beautiful Maytime, when nature was dressed in her richest garb; but Bryan Maguire was too much absorbed in his own thoughts to derive any pleasure from the contemplation of the scenic charms around him.

His walk led him to a spring well that bubbled from beneath a rock in a secluded dale, and over which a flowering hawthorn threw its grateful shade. This well had the reputation of being a "holy" one, and the surrounding peasantry were accustomed to make stations in the early Autumn. Bryan was in the act of carving his initials on the back of the ancient hawthorn when a slight noise behind him attracted his attention. Glancing in that direction he saw a female figure. It was Winnie Byrne, the daughter of one of his father's cottiers, who had come for a pitcher of water. Winnie, though rather plump of figure possessed a face of considerable attractions, albeit a heavy frown habitually lingered about her sloe-black eyes. As it happened that she and Bryan Maguire had not met for several years it is not surprising that he failed to recognise her at first sight; but immediately on his recovering from the slight surprise which her unexpected presence occasioned, he advanced towards her with outstretched hand, cheerily remarking: "Winnie Byrne, by all that's good! How you have grown out of my knowledge, Winnie, since you and I were young!" "Oh, thank you, Mr Maguire. It's little thought ever you gave to the like of me

are going away to-morrow?" "It is true, then, Winnie. Permit me to quaff a draught from your pitcher. Well, to be sure, what a fine girl you have grown!" "And, Mr Maguire"—pretending not to have heard his remark about herself—"do you pay heed to what the saint who caused this well to spring forth, and blessed it for the poor people? Didn't he lay his curse on the *shoneens* of the parish, and predict that no native of it would ever be called to the priesthood?"

"I have certainly heard of the strange malediction," answered Bryan, "but I do not know that it has ever yet been put to the test; I suppose that ordeal is reserved for me." He tried to laugh, but the serious look in the young girl's face prevented him. "He should be greater than the saint who could do that; besides something tells me you were not born to fill that high station you may become great in the other walks of life—but the bells of glory will never ring while you read the Gospel of our holy Church." "Well, now, Winnie, I did not think you were such a speaker!—a prophetess, in fact. But I hope you have not been taking lessons from old Sinead the sybil that lives up in the hills yonder?" He laughed heartily at what he considered his own natural wit, and failed to notice the momentary blanching of Winnie's cheek as she marked his observation. In the confusion of the moment she felt at a loss for a reply, and Bryan continued in the same light tone: "You know Sinead can work both good and evil for the *colleens*, but won't lift a finger for the boys—at least so I am told." "It matters not," observed the maiden, testily, "if you are determined to go on your course though—if I may make so bold—maybe you would regret it when too late, and feel that you had missed your vocation in not pursuing the life of an honest farmer with some handsome *colleen* for a wife, who would love you and serve you through every change of fortune." The damsel assumed a dramatic pose as she spoke these words; her face appeared flushed with excitement, and her dark eyes glistened like diamonds. Even the ascetic student was visibly affected as he gazed upon her form and noted the earnestness of her appeal. Perhaps you are right, Winnie. I think I see plainly that I *have* missed my vocation, and it is passing strange how you have been the first to point it out to me. For the future you will have more interest in my eyes than any other female of my acquaintance. Hear me now, Winnie"—he took her hand in his and looked wistfully into her flashing eyes—"you have kindled an unwonted flame within my bosom, and it is for you to encourage it or not. I will leave the dangerous path I have been treading; I will brave the reproaches of parents and friends, as well as the sneers of my enemies if you will consent to share my—love! Speak, Winnie, and make me happy or miserable by your decision." "Bryan,

rashly, but—but—my feelings prompted me to speak so."

Here she appeared totally overpowered by emotion, and it was not until the love-smitten student had fondled her in his arms like a pettish child that she was able to proceed. At length, laying her head on his breast she resumed; "I have loved you secretly since we were children, Bryan, but was always too shy to confess it before you. However, it may be Heaven's will to bring us together in this way; and if you will be true to your own little Winnie you need never fear what others say. I have a ring about me at present, Bryan, which I will give to you as a token of my love—it is the same that my mother, and her mother before her, wore; and you will keep it while you are true to me, for young men are fickle in love affairs." "Do not harbour the thought, my darling Winnie, that I could act so basely," said the infatuated young man, as he clasped her to his bosom in a paroxysm of delight. He kissed the ring with more fervour than if it was a saintly relic; and after "many a fond and locked embrace," he returned to his parents' domicile in that state of semi-lunacy which first love invariably produces. It is needless to describe the scene which took place when he expressed his determination to forego the ecclesiastical state; enough to say that with his superior power of reasoning, he soon convinced them that he was right and that they were wrong.

Next evening found Bryan Maguire at the holy well; but it was evident that something had gone wrong with him, for his face was ghastly pale, and a visible tremor shook his frame. Winnie soon approached with her pitcher, and her quick eye took in at a glance the crest-fallen appearance of her lover; but her womanly instinct or natural cunning deterred her from making any comment on his pallid countenance and agitated demeanour.

"I am glad that you have been faithful to your promise," she observed, at the same time extending both her hands towards him. "I had such an ugly dream about you last night; but dreams go by contraries, you know." A melting glance and fascinating smile accompanied her remark.

"It is about last night I desired to speak to you, Winnie," he rejoined, in a hollow voice. The artful Winnie pretended to look scared at this, and quickly withdrew her hands from his. "Your parents, I suppose, are against you marrying a poor cottier's daughter, instead of choosing someone with riches and fine clothes!"

"No, Winnie, they are yet unaware of our engagement; but—but you knew my aunt Joanna, didn't you?" Winnie could

child ; but I remember how she used to fondle me, and call me her own darling *cann-a-bawn*. Last night, Winnie, I awoke out of a light slumber and I saw her—*saw her*, Winnie as she appeared in life, but her face was sorrowful, and the hand that she held over me was fleshless, like that of a skeleton. “Bryan,” said she in a sepulchral voice, “you ought to give back that ring. Just these few words—and then she disappeared from the room. Winnie gave vent to a sarcastic laugh. “And so your knowledge, Bryan, does not keep you from believing in nightmares and no sense. Or maybe you are satisfied with your victory over my poor heart, and want to cast me off the first opportunity—” “No, Winnie, I did not mean to deceive you ; but what I have told you is true as that heaven is above us. My love for you remains unchanged and unalienable.”

“Then you will forgive me, Bryan, if I have spoken too rashly for, after all, what has a poor maiden like me but her reputation?”

“And I prize you the more for guarding it, Winnie ; but I have a fear that last night’s dream does not bode good to us.”

“It was but an empty dream, Bryan, for I have often experienced such things ; so let us talk no more about it. I know that your little Winnie is dearer to you than all your rich relations, and that you will yet be proud to claim her as your bride.”

Alas ! it was the voice of the charmer charming wisely. Bryan Maguire had been snared in the meshes of love, and Winnie Byrne inwardly determined that he should not escape, for in seeing him she saw her only chance of attaining to that position which her heart and soul aspired.

It was midnight when a low tap sounded on the door of the hovel tenanted by Sinade the witch. “Come in, Winnie Byrne,” said a harsh voice. The door was pushed open, and Winnie, enveloped in a heavy mantle, entered. “Well,” said the crooked woman who was bending over a few embers, “what news since I saw you last ?” “The charm done its work ; Bryan Maguire, the student, drank it from my pitcher at the holy well.”

“I know—I know ; but your bird is only caught, not caged. How will it be with you if he turns to another ?”

The girl became deathly pale, and a baleful light flashed from her dark eyes. “If he should—*death* !”

The summer was waning and the days began to grow short. It had been a long warm summer, that gave promise of a rich harvest ; at least so Bryan Maguire’s father averred, as he and his son sat indoors one bright afternoon discussing the prospects of the farm—a theme very irksome to Bryan, and in an equal

"Bless me," said the farmer, "this is Parson Murray's daughter, I wonder what can she mean by driving here."

But they were not long left in doubt, for Miss Murray, a lively, pleasant, and prepossessing young lady—in a few words informed them, how, being on an errand of charity, her steed grew unusually restive, so much so that her nerves began to fail her, and she deemed it prudent to seek the aid of some person able to make him tractable and drive him home. Of course the duty naturally devolved upon Bryan, who, when about to start, received instructions from his father to negotiate with the clergyman for the sale of a young ram which the farmer secretly admired.

If Bryan Maguire appeared timid and reserved at first, Miss Murray soon dispelled his reticence by alluding to topics with which he was familiar—literature, art, and science—so that before half the journey was completed he found himself deep in the mazes of a learned controversy.

The Parson received him hospitably, showed him his rare books, costly pictures, and curious antiquities—even mentioned the rare qualities of his flocks and herds, without in the least recalling to Bryan's memory the matter of his father's wish regarding the ram—so that the hours appeared to fly on angels' wings; and when Bryan bethought him of taking his leave, dinner was announced, and he was obliged to remain. After dinner the young lady was anxious to entertain him with a few national airs on the piano—he should hear her favourite, "The Coulin," and perhaps he might enlighten her as to its true origin, and give her much desired information on other points connected with Irish music. The good Parson fell under the spell of the melody, and snored a discordant accompaniment in his chair; some subtle influence attracted the eyes of both player and listener towards each other much more frequently than occasion demanded,—smile answered smile, and tell-tale blushes hung out their signals of distress; in truth it was a repetition of the old, old story

Which has been since the world began,

And shall be till its close.

Bryan Maguire, despite his plighted vow of constancy to Winnie Byrne—a vow wrung from him through the influence of an evil power—there and then, in the exuberance of a love as pure as it was exalted, declared his passion in a few simple phrases, and was honestly accepted. It was not until the fatal die was cast and cooler moments returned to him, that his conscience whispered of the serious consequences likely to ensue; but when he contrasted the fair and refined creature from whom he had reluctantly torn himself, with the coarse uncultured girl who tried to lure him like a siren, to his destruction; he felt satisfied that his honour was not imperilled. Day after day he framed some excuse for visiting at the Rectory. The clergyman

was too deeply engrossed with his books and antiquities to suspect even dimly, the existence of the attachment; while on the other hand, the temporary absence of Winnie Byrne from home, left everything smooth for the course of their affection. And it was now that a new life seemed to dawn upon our hero; the scales had fallen from his eyes—his hitherto settled conviction that beauty, virtue, and refinement could not be found in the same being, was disproved; his path of love was strewn with flowers, and all that marred his happiness was the presence of her who was the first to make him feel the illusory pleasure of sensual or merely human affections.

Even while these and similar thoughts were struggling in his mind, the web of his destiny was being woven, and his destruction planned by the discarded Winnie and her accomplice, who acted the part of a spy over all his movements; and who, for some real or supposed wrong done to one of her family by an ancestor of Bryan's, determined to wreak vengeance on his head. Alas! for frail humanity, she found a fitting tool in Winnie Byrne for the accomplishment of her hellish plans; for it was through her advice that the young woman wrought the spells which so effectually over-reached him at the holy well.

It was a bright morning in August, and the sun was shining forth with all his splendour, bathing in golden light the hills and vales around Moate-Granoge. Farmer Maguire's reapers were preparing to commence the harvest, and many a pleasant jest went round as they munched the ripe apples that were distributed amongst them by the farmer's generous wife. But where was Winnie Byrne, whose wont it was to take the prize at binding the farmer's corn in former years? Verily she was not far off, for just then she was concealed behind a fence with Sinead the witch.

"Did I not tell you," said the latter, "that it was better to bide the hour of vengeance than to make a scene over the matter? You have only to follow my instructions to bring both death and destruction on him and *her*—the hardened heretic that took him from you, *alanna*. Just step into the cornfield as unconcerned as ever and tie the first sheaf, taking care to shape nine hearts out of nine ears, and stick a pin through each one of them. This will *do* for her within a year and a day if you bury it under nine feet of earth. For him put down a bottle of blood in a grave and stamp on it nine times. It will soon burst, and so will his heart at the same moment.

The misguided girl, actuated by disappointed love and jealousy, faithfully obeyed the crone's instructions. There are powers of evil whose operations and functions we understand not, and therefore why should we endeavour to account for the fact—for fact it was—that within the year and the day Bryan Maguire and his new love were both gathered to their fathers.

His death was rather tragical, occurring on the funeral day of his affianced bride. Nor did Winnie Byrne long survive; disappointed, remorseful, and broken-hearted, she actually withered away, manifesting a sad example of the result of ungoverned earthly affections and passions. Even to this day the deadly nightshade grows upon her unhallowed grave.

THE HAUNTED MILLER,

A TALE OF ST. MARTIN'S NIGHT.

About eighty years ago there lived in a secluded part of Westmeath an humble peasant named Martin Coughlan, who followed the avocation of miller. This man, though entirely illiterate, was possessed of a tenacious memory, and could keep a correct account of the numerous sacks and bags that passed through his hands without the aid of brand or register. Nay more, he could recite all the prophecies of Columkille, or repeat any sermon that he might happen to hear, with an orthœpic correctness that earned him the envy of the local pedagogue. Even in heraldic lore he was not behind hand, and he professed to trace his own pedigree to MacCoughlan, lord of Delvin. But then Martin was an original character, and differed from his fellow men in many respects. He professed a kind of scepticism in religious matters—scoffed at the belief in the existence of ghosts, fairies, and even *devils*, stigmatizing them as pure inventions to frighten weak minded people; for, he maintained, how could such beings exist without bodies? He was a declaimer against all kinds of superstition, hence he would not respect St. Martin's day by stopping the mill, and from that circumstance it was that this little tale came to be written. One St. Martin's night he was returning to his home as usual, after a heavy day's work, as he himself expressed it, when, as he turned at the "three roads" near the rath of K——, he observed three men before him bearing a coffin on their shoulders. Something prompted him to lend his assistance at the vacant corner, so, without taking the trouble to examine the appearance of his strangely found companions, he took the place, and the party journeyed on till cock-crow, when the coffin was suddenly cast to the ground by the strangers, who instantly disappeared. Curious to know what kind of corpse rested inside Martin took off the lid, when to his disappointment and disgust he found it contained nothing save a *faneul* of straw. Muttering heavy curses on the parties who had played this practical joke on him, he gave the wisp of straw a kick, when instantly a black rat tumbled out on the road, and, after recovering his equilibrium, coolly sat down and surveyed the miller. He attempted to drive it away, but to his surprise it retreated from him only a few yards, and when he bent his steps towards home it preceded him at a short distance, and thenceforward, by day or night it never left his presence, notwithstanding all his endeavours to rid himself of the unwelcome familiar. A whole year passed away in this manner, and on the next St. Martin's day it was more than usually demonstrative in its attentions, so much so that the miller while engaged in his work could not resist

the temptation to throw his coat over the uncanny beast so as if possible to hide it from his tormented eyes for even a few moments. But the demoniac being evaded his quickest movements, and in his frantic efforts for success the coat he held became entangled in the grinding machinery and suddenly drew him into its horrible embrace. It needed but a very brief space of time to reduce to a mangled corpse the haunted miller; but belated travellers aver that they have met his ghost in lonely bye-ways rapidly pursuing a sable rodent that lights the chase with eyes of ruddy flame. Once he stopped to answer a young man who had the temerity to question him:—

“Work by day and sleep by night,
And let the wicked take their flight!”

OSCAR AND MAURA.

A TRADITION OF ST. JOHN'S EVE.

The site of an ancient graveyard is still pointed out on the margin of the great bog of Allan, a few miles beyond Kilbeggan. No interment has taken place there for more than a century, and few people care to pass it at the ghostly hour of midnight. A weird legend connected with this churchyard may help to explain why the peasant never doffs his hat as he hurriedly passes its gloomy precincts; even the customary prayer for the dead never rises to his lips.

The last of the Irish kings was laid in his grave, the Saxon conquerors were enriching themselves with the spoils which they wrested from the unfortunate natives, and the royal blood of Ireland was destined to flow in plebian veins. Oscar O'Connor, a lineal descendant of the illustrious Roderic, found himself, at the age of twenty-two, the possessor of a few acres of barren soil which afforded him but scanty subsistence, though he toiled early and late to provide food for himself and his only sister, who was committed to his care when his parents were called away to a better world. It happened that one Midsummer Eve he returned to his home much earlier than usual, and, as his sister placed his simple repast before him, she noticed his flushed countenance and abstracted manner.

"Has anything unusual happened to you, Oscar?" she inquired, "for you appear to be very much excited."

"No, Maura," he replied sullenly. "I am a little heated after my labour, that's all."

"But you do not seem inclined to partake of your food, and it is so long since you have eaten."

"Do not bore me with your silly remarks," he rejoined, endeavouring to force a smile to his countenance. "I have no appetite just now, and as the evening is so pleasant, I mean to avail myself of a quiet walk across the moor. It may be late when I return, so you can leave my supper on the table, and go to bed. To-morrow I will explain all." He arose from his seat, replaced his hat on his head, and hastily left the cottage.

Next morning young Maura was aroused from an unrefreshing slumber by hearing a groan from her brother's room, which was close to her own. On hastening to his chamber, she found him stretched on the bed exhausted by some sudden illness. His face was pale and emaciated, his lips were dark and shrivelled, and his eyeballs turned wildly in their sockets. To all her anxious questionings he vouchsafed but one answer: "Have

writhing in mental agony, tossing about on his humble couch as though endeavouring to avoid some horrible objects that met his gaze on every side. All the while his devoted sister stood by his bedside trying to soothe his agonies, though he often motioned her away from his presence.

One morning he fell into a broken slumber from sheer exhaustion, and as Maura attempted to adjust his pillow, she displaced two pewter plates which lay hidden beneath it. They rolled to the floor with a loud crash, and the next moment her brother started from his slumber with a loud scream and grasped her rudely with his fleshless hands.

"What have you done, woman—Maura—sister—what have you done?" he asked in fierce, husky accents.

"Nothing of any harm, Oscar, I assure you. I have merely overturned those old plates that are now lying upon the floor."

"Nothing of any harm!" he reiterated in the same sepulchral tone. "Nothing to injure your unfortunate brother! Ah! by one unlucky accident you have injured me more than all the fiends of hell, and you have blasted all my earthly hopes for ever."

"You terrify me, Oscar, with your strange remarks. My torture is far greater than yours as long as you persist in withholding this secret from my confidence."

"Then let there be an end to the mystery. Maura, know, therefore, that if the plates which lie at your feet were suffered to remain undisturbed beneath my pillow for forty hours longer I would possess a power sufficient to subdue half the world. I discovered some months ago that the fern plant blossoms, germinates, and sheds its seed at the eleventh hour on St. John's Eve, and that the person who would be brave enough to catch some of the seed on a copy of the Gospel of St. John, convey it home and preserve it between two pewter plates for nine consecutive days and nights, would possess a charm fit to expel the Saxons from this land of ours, and place the sceptre of this kingdom in the hands of a true Irish king. Failure meant death, but not even death could deter me from making the attempt. A luxuriant cluster of fern hangs over the tiny rivulet on the opposite side of the broad moor. On St. John's Eve I left you mystified at my strange conduct, and I braced myself up for the dread ordeal. It is not for me to reveal all the sufferings I had to endure—fiends of hell, incapable of injuring me in person, attempted to terrify me by rising up before me and around me in the most hideous shapes imaginable—and were I not imbued with almost supernatural courage, I must have succumbed. But now all is vain and futile; you have become the unconscious agent of the arch-fiend who looked upon me as a usurper of his power, and now I must pay the penalty of my temerity by yielding to

bury me beneath the black tombstone in the churchyard of Kilmore, and try to forget that I ever existed."

Ere three days had elapsed the body of Oscar O'Connor was laid beneath the unlettered tombstone, and the wild *caine* of the faithful clans whose valorous ancestors followed the standard of the princely O'onors, was wafted on the evening breeze. Young Maura, now totally bereft of friend or protector, mourned her brother through all the changing seasons, and when St. John's Eve again returned she conceived the rash idea of gathering the fern seed at the proper hour, if for no other purpose than to be revenged on the Evil One, who gained a victory over her unfortunate brother through her means. She repaired to the fairy grove beside the stream, placed the Sacred Book beneath the fern stalks, and when the midnight hour was at hand her heart throbbed violently as she heard the seed falling upon the open leaves of the Gospel. Having secured the seed between the two plates by means of a handkerchief, she gathered up her flowing robes and took a hurried survey of the broad lonely moor over which she would have to travel ere she reached her cottage, which stood beyond the old churchyard of Kilmore. Just then the sound of a hunter's horn reached her ears, and soon the prince of darkness, with his dog-fiends were on her trail. Hideous monsters, that nature could not form in her most abortive moods, rode behind Abaddon, upon horses that changed their shapes and dimensions at every stride, and hounds that appeared to have been begotten by Rerberus, chased the terrified maiden across the moonlit plain, their deep baying and unearthly yells resounding on the still night air. On sped the misguided Maura, bearing her hard-won charm beneath her mantle, nearer and nearer pressed the infernal hunters; the old churchyard loomed in view; she endeavoured to get inside the wall before the hounds were upon her, knowing full well that they dared not cross its sacred precincts; but at the last moment her foot tripped against a stone and she fell prone to the earth. Next morning her lifeless corpse was discovered on the sable tombstone but no trace of the charmed seed could be found. It is said that when the bonfires are lighted on St. John's Eve the sound of huntsman's horn is borne on the breeze, and two shadowy figures rush through the gloaming, followed by a pattering of invisible feet that causes a momentary shiver in the foliage overhead. Then the old people cross themselves and pray to be delivered from the fate of OSCAR AND MAURA.

LEGEND OF THE BLACK PIG.

In the reign of Nua of the Silver Hand (eight hundred years before the Christian era) a druid surnamed Muedhu, who received his first inspiration on the mountain which bears his name, opened an academy in a secluded grove that stood somewhere between Lough Swilly and the present City of Derry, for the laudable purpose of inducting the youth of that district in the various branches of learning then in vogue. Pupils soon flocked in upon him, and during the first quarter everything appeared to go on prosperously with the druid, the curriculum of his college being rather attractive than otherwise, ranging as it did from simple pugilism to the occult sciences. But, notwithstanding the precautions adopted by the wily professor, it soon became bruited abroad that he was devoting more time to the pleasures of the chase than was consistent with the nature of his avocation.

Moreover, a serious change in the physical condition of the pupils brought out the fact that Muedhu by magical aid was wont to amuse himself by turning the swiftest of the children into wild boars and the others into hounds so that he could enjoy the inhuman sport according to his own cruel, selfish nature. When this outrage on humanity became publicly known popular indignation ran very high; parents waited on their respective chiefs who referred the matter to the arch-druid, who declared it to be meet and conformable to the spirit of justice that Muedhu should suffer death for having prostituted his spiritual powers.

"You are more competent to judge yourselves," he added, "of the best means for effecting his capture; but I may tell you that you will have to proceed very cautiously, because if he should get time to transform himself into the shape of a pig his flesh will be rendered invulnerable save and except one small spot between the ears. Furthermore, I may inform you that if while in this shape he happen to root up an herb containing certain magical properties he will work ruin and destruction in this country."

A meeting of all the neighbouring chiefs and champions endowed with parental feelings was quickly convened, and it was then and there unanimously resolved to get rid of the wicked druid at all hazards.

At daybreak next morning a number of armed men surrounded the druid's retreat, whilst others, fully equipped for the chase,

sessed, sniffed of their approach and lost no time in assuming a porcine appearance, then rushing through their ranks with the stubbornness of a Connemara porker he scattered them right and left, and true to his swinish instincts, struck off in the direction which they did not want him to go. The Danaan chief who ruled in Emania was the first to try the strength of his javelin on the black boar; but though his blow was "mighty, swift, keen and certain" (to quote the ancient chroniclers), it had no other effect than the eradication of a few bristles, and the breaking of his spear into *smithereens*. The boar now having some breathing time commenced his rooting operations at this spot—since known as the Dane's Cast—and rooted on through several of the neighbouring counties until he came to Ballinamuck (Mouth of the Pig's Ford), where a Fomorian chieftain unexpectedly suspended his rooting propensity by striking him on the snout with his handstone. Nothing daunted, however, Mucdhu held on to the ford of Finnea, through Castlepollard and Killucan, by Lisnabin (where he rested for the night), and after taking a favourite rub against a stone at Cloghan, he passed on by Rathconnell, skirting Mullingar on his way to Lough Owel. Here he took a good deep draught from that copious spring, and striking clear between Ballymore and the Hill of Usnagh he reached the ford of Athlone at sundown.

Just as he entered the ford a Firbolg chief, named Luan, who held sway in that part of the country happened to be conversing with his druid on an esker that jutted into the Shannon on the opposite side. He was the first to notice the Black Pig advancing through the turbid waters. He turned sharply to his druid and directing his attention to the strange object inquired what it was. One moment sufficed the clear-seeing druid to ascertain who it was and the object of his visit.

"It is one, O Chief," he replied, "who, if he succeed in reaching this grassy mound (whereon an herb grows that will render him stronger than all the giants in Erin). will not only accomplish the destruction of the great Druidic Order and of the valiant chiefs whom they have served; but even the very elements of nature will be made subservient to his influence."

When the druid pronounced these words the mighty Luan unslung his battle-axe, which no warrior of these degenerate days could wield, and as the disguised Mucdhu reached *terra firma* its sharp edge smote him on the one fatal spot between the ears and he fell back stone dead, excreting with his latest breath, severally and collectively, the whole fraternity of National teachers who might happen to exist in Erin down to the close of the nineteenth century.

Luan was so proud of his exploit that he built a bridge over

haps those of other counties, still believe that the last great battle for freedom will be fought along the route taken by Mucdhu, popularly known as the VALLEY OF THE BLACK FIG.



THE WEIRD WOMAN OF DERNAVEAGH.

It was the day after the bloody battle of Leney hill.* Myself and my mother were standing in the old fort that fronted our house watching and waiting for some one to bring us tidings of the conflict, for we lived in a lonely place, and many of our relatives and neighbours had gone to fight with the insurgents, and all we heard of it was the booming of the cannon. The shadows of night were beginning to creep around us and the full harvest moon was appearing in the east. We noticed a large crane circling our cottage several times, and the thought struck me that it might be the spirit of some favoured friend bidding a final farewell to the house which often echoed the laughter and songs of the light-hearted merrymakers before the insurrection broke out in our unfortunate country. My mother appeared to have been touched with the same feeling for she remarked to me with a tremor in her voice: "I think that crane is no good sign, a lanna, and hear the sky-goat how mournfully he bleats! let us go in and say the rosary." Just as we crossed the bawn we noticed an old woman with a heavy pack on her back approaching the kitchen door. Her countenance was shrivelled and repulsive-looking; but owing to the heavy trouble that was weighing down our hearts we took little notice of her appearance. She asked leave to warm herself at the fire which was readily granted, but instead of seating herself on a stool she sat down on the hearth with her head against the partition wall. She remained silently contemplating the decaying embers for a short time, during which we were engaged in household affairs, then, giving vent to a heavy sigh, she arose with considerable difficulty and prepared to take her departure. When she reached the door she stood for a few moments and my mother, whose mind was occupied with the one thought, plucked up sufficient courage to ask her if she heard any tidings from the battle though she almost dreaded to receive a reply. "The battle? The battle is over and lost! All is lost!" and with these words of dreadful import the crone disappeared.

Who can tell the sorrow we endured throughout that long, weary night? Who could depict our anguish on the morrow when the truth of the weird woman's words received confirmation from the few maimed and half-famished stragglers that re-

* Popularly known as the Battle of the Crooked-wood, fought 7th September 1798. The King's troops, under the command of the Earl of

counted the dismal tale at every cottage door on their way to their miserable homes ? * * *

Evening came again—a calm, sultry evening—and as I turned in from milking the cows I was considerably startled at seeing the strange woman standing against the door. I bade her “good evening,” or “God save you,” I don't know which, but instead of returning my salutation she craved a drink of milk. I returned from the kitchen with a noggin of milk to find her seated on the threshold, and I could not help observing a distressed look on her face as she struggled to her feet. Again she paused for a brief while and then hobbled off with her heavy pack.

On the third evening at the same hour she appeared again, and before I had time to address her she craved a charity of meal. I took a plate from the dresser and went to the meal-bin, but when I returned she was again seated with her heavy pack resting against the wall. She received the alms in silence and made an effort to rise, but the burden on her back appeared to be too heavy. She held out her hands to me for assistance, but the inhuman grimace that overspread her countenance as she did so sent a thrill of horror through my frame and made me retreat from her gaze. I could hear her shuffling towards the door where she uttered three unearthly screams and then vanished, never to appear again.

On the following “Holly Eve” I was returning from Mullingar with two of my relations who, when about two miles from the town, went into a wayside cabin to light their pipes. Just then the moon shone out as bright as the sun at mid-day, when happening to glance along the road I was almost overwhelmed with surprise at seeing it strewn with silver coin—tenpennies, half-crowns, and five-shilling pieces! Scarcely believing my senses I turned up my apron and was engaged picking them up when my two cousins overtook me. I called to them to assist me in gathering the silver, but the moment I spoke it all disappeared save what I had collected in my apron which amounted to more than seven pounds. I could never gain any clue to this lucky windfall; but perhaps I am not far wrong in surmising that the Weird Woman took this means of disburdening herself of her mysterious load.

NOTE—A relative of the woman from whom the foregoing tale emanated in a much later age, dreamed on three successive nights that he would find a treasure hidden on the margin of a river near his home. He was commanded to bring a spade and a scythe with him. When he commenced digging a cock would appear which was to be decapitated by the scythe and the body thrown into the river. He found the identical spot, but was afraid to carry out the conditions. Some short time afterward while in bed a strange monster entered the room and, seizing one of his hands, bit off a portion of his thumb!

THE HAG OF THE IVY TREE

Throughout the whole County of Westmeath a wilder scape grace than Martin Devanny could not be found. At wedding and wakes, at faction-fight and fair, he always cut a prominent figure, and in all the various branches of gambling he was a proficient. It was a favourite boast of his that he was not afraid of "dog, man, or devil;" a foolhardy expression, to say the least of it; but Martin was strong in folly as well as other things. Many a time his uncle, with whom he lived, craved of him to abandon his night-walking and bad company, even the priest spoke of him from the altar as a disgrace to his flock; but neither priest nor patriarch could make him resign his evil habits, for the demon of vice had bound him firmly with his chain and only waited a favourable opportunity to drag him to his ruin. But the hour of his downfall came much sooner than Martin expected, as it comes to all wickedly-disposed persons. One "Holly Eve" he was returning at the dread midnight hour from a gambling-house, with a pack of cards in his pocket when as he was passing the ivy tree that overhung the roadside at the Fox-park, he saw what many a belated traveller saw before—a small hut at the foot of the tree and a hideous old hag seated inside spinning by firelight! Another man would have blest himself and passed on without risking a second glance at the uncanny sight; but Martin being a stranger to fear under any circumstances, and then somewhat excited with liquor, considered it a good joke to try what kind of reception he would get from the hag of the Ivy Tree. He crept stealthily into the low hut and standing behind the old hag's back boldly asked a light for his pipe. The spinner appeared not to notice him, but continued her work, whereupon he rudely shoved her off the box that served her for a seat and coolly proceeded to light his pipe but the moment he touched one of the few coals that burned on the hearth a bluish flame shot up to the roof illuminating the apartment with a dazzling, but unearthly light. Martin was so awed by his weird surroundings that he would have made a hasty exit; but happening to glance at the box he saw that it was a coffin with a sable breastplate attached to it. Even in his terror he could not forbear reading the inscription which, in plain characters, read as follows:—

MARTIN DEVANNY
DIED, 31st OCTOBER, 1841,
AGED 29 YEARS.
R.I.P.

The rash young man waited to see no more. Almost overpowered with horror he rushed out on the highway and tetter

showed he had only one year to live and he firmly resolved to make good use of his time; but before the summer-time came round he relapsed into his former bad habits, persuading himself that his adventure in the Hag's hut was merely a dream. When Hallowe'en returned he attended a wake in his neighbourhood, and, in order to show how indifferent he felt about the matter as well as to give a fresh example of his swaggering powers, he made a bet that he would drink a bottle of whiskey at a single draught. He performed his feat amidst the plaudits of the company; but ere he had time to speak his soul was in eternity!

THE WHITE LADY.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century there lived in a secluded part of Westmeath, which still bears the appropriate name of Dysart, a widow and her unmarried daughter; their means of living being the cultivation of such crops as their little farm would produce. One morning the young woman arose much later than usual and on going into the kitchen her mother was so struck with her haggard appearance that she anxiously inquired if she was ill, for at the time a dangerous fever was rife in the neighbourhood.

"No, mother," she replied, "but I fear something strange is going to happen me, for last night as I lay awake in bed thinking how unfair the world's wealth is divided, and wishing to be very rich, a Lady dressed in white entered my room and bending the fairest face I have ever seen over me requested me to tell her the subject of my thoughts. I was not so much afraid so I told her candidly that I was longing for riches. She then told me that it was in her power to gratify my wish if I would only consent to go with her to some field hard by where a large treasure was hidden. I refused to go with her mother, though she tried hard to persuade me. Little cause that I should feel weary and fatigued." "I think you acted foolishly, child," observed the mother. "Few people are favoured with such a visitor as you had last night, and I fear you have lost the only chance you will ever get by becoming rich. I only wish I was in your place."

Next morning Catherine approached her parent with the same ghastly pallor upon her countenance. Again the widow asked the cause of her seeming illness, but the maiden tried to evade her questions for some time. At length being forced to confide her secret to her mother she told her that the White Lady had paid her a second visit and how hard she found it to resist her importunities. "I think I would have consented to accompany her," she went on, "if I had not remarked how different an appearance she assumed compared with the preceding night. Her face was not half so beautiful, and occasionally she changed into a dead person, her frame getting rigid and cold, her eyeballs turning white, and even her garments giving out the musty smell of the grave. She would not consent to depart till she extracted a promise from me that I would go with her if you, mother, agreed to her horrible proposal, which I know for your child's sake you will never do."

"What a silly fool you are, Catherine!" exclaimed the widow, her cupidity overmastering her natural instincts. "Here is some poor soul—perhaps a young relative for all you know—

happiness and you will not relieve her! I tell you, child, that if the White Lady comes again you *must* go and receive the hidden treasure, for it is your luck."

"But, mother, you know I could not walk with the dead." "I warn you again not to be so obstinate. Think of the costly robes you can wear; of the splendid jewels and the heaps of gold! 'Tis not in nature to refuse such an offer!" * * * *

Next morning the sun rose bright and beautiful, but Catherine, the widow's daughter, did not arise. The hours wore by and the mother becoming impatient went into the maiden's room to call her. But the ears of her darling child would hear no human sound again, for Death had claimed her as his own, and for her all the riches of the earth were but dross and vanity.



THE CHURCHYARD BRIDE.

"In the churchyard of Erigle Truagh, in the Barony of Truagh, county Monaghan, there is said to be a spirit which appears to persons whose families are there interred. Its appearance, which is generally made in the following manner, is uniformly fatal, being an omen of death to those who are so unhappy as to meet with it. When a funeral takes place it watches the person who remains last in the graveyard, over whom it possesses a fascinating influence. If the loiterer be a young man, it takes the shape of a beautiful female, inspires him with a charmed passion, and exacts a promise to meet in the churchyard on a month from that day; this promise is sealed by a kiss, which communicates a deadly taint to the individual who receives it. It then disappears, and no sooner does the young man quit the churchyard than he remembers the history of the spectre—which is well known in the parish—sinks into despair, dies, and is buried in the place of appointment on the day when the promise was to have been fulfilled. If, on the contrary, it appears to a female, it assumes the form of a young man of exceeding elegance and beauty.

"Some years ago I was shown the grave of a young person about eighteen years of age, who was said to have fallen a victim to it; and it is not more than ten months since a man of the same parish declared that he gave the promise and the fatal kiss, and consequently looked upon himself as lost. He took a fever, died, and was buried on the day appointed for the meeting, which was exactly a month from that of the interview. There are several cases of the same kind mentioned, but the two now alluded to are the only ones that came within my personal knowledge. It appears, however, that the spectre does not confine itself to the churchyard, as there has been instances mentioned of its appearance at weddings and dances, where it never failed to secure its victims

is strictly local superstition, or whether it is considered peculiar to other churchyards in Ireland, or elsewhere. In its female shape it somewhat resembles the Elle maids of Scandinavia; but I am acquainted with no account of fairies or apparitions in which the sex is said to be changed, except in that of the devil himself. The country-people say it is Death."

—Note to Carleton's "Killeevy."

The night was calm, and a clear full moon
 Was beaming o'er hill and lea,
 As I parted my true-love all too soon,
 Beneath the trysting tree.
 My thoughts flowed on to the morrow's noon—
 To the hour so long deferred;
 When away down the vale rose a doleful wail,
 And this is what I heard:—
 Aileen O'More!—Aileen ashore!
 From thine earthly bondage come;
 Aileen O'More! on the spirit shore
 Thy kindred call thee home.

I hastened back to the myrtle bower,
 I found my darling there,
 Her form bent low like a faded flower,
 The death dew on her hair
 I clasped her hand—Ah, why did I cower?
 No pulse within it stirred.
 Whilst once again that dolorous strain
 In the haunted vale I heard:
 Aileen O'More! Aileen ashore!
 From thy earthly bondage come;
 Aileen O'More! on the spirit shore
 Thy kindred call thee home.

In a lonely nook we laid her at rest,
 And we decked her grave with flowers;
 But their bloom was crushed by my heaving breast
 Through all the weary hours—
 Till the midnight came, when a phantom guest
 Stood nigh where my love was interred;
 As she stole away in the dawn of day
 This warning voice I heard:
 Phelim, ashore! weep no more,
 For soon the time will come,
 When, thy bondage o'er, to the spirit-shore,
 Thy bride will bear thee home!

APPENDIX.

FATALISM, OR PREDESTINATION.

Those who profess a belief in Predestination (which is diametrically opposed to the Christian doctrine of Freewill) maintain that everything is subject to an unchangeable destiny, pre-established either by chance or by the Creator; the inference being that man has no power over his own action, an invisible influence controlling his fate. How often do we hear the peasantry make use of the expressions—"What is to be *will* be;" "Lucky man lucky lot;" "He could not avoid his fate;" "Marriage and hanging go by lot;" "Who is born to be hanged will never be drowned," and others indicative of a belief in predestination. All the leading characters in "The Dead-Watchers" are supposed to be imbued with the fatality myth which has come down to us from remote antiquity. Thus we learn that St. Patrick when he came to preach the Gospel found a pagan one afternoon fencing a field with *thrawneens*. "Your work is both foolish and futile, honest man," observed the saint. "It will serve my time," said the pagan, "for I am to die a natural death to-morrow morning." Thereupon the man of God ordained that no man should know the time of his death in future, save and except when condemned to suffer capital punishment. Up to quite a recent period dumb persons were accredited with the gift of second sight. In one of our popular legends, relating to the origin of *Cairn-Thierna*, we are told how the son of a chieftain (who was foredoomed to meet his death by water on his sixteenth birthday), endeavoured to thwart the decrees of fate by immuring himself in a specially prepared asylum on the top of the Galtee Mountains, where not a drop of water could be found. As the fatal day was drawing to a close he ventured on a short walk in the enclosure. Through a slight accident he fell, striking his forehead against a stone which rendered him temporarily unconscious. It appears that while in this state his face sank into a cow-track which was filled with water after a recent shower, the result proving fatal.

THE YOUNG PRIEST OF TUBBER

forms the theme of a local tradition which I here give as a pendant to the foregoing legend. A saint who resided in Tubber, found it necessary to censure the people for a sacrilegious outrage committed in the parish, and in the warmth of his zeal he predicted that not one of their descendants would attain to the priesthood. Centuries passed by and every age but verified the saint's malediction—no student of divinity was successful in his career. At length Tubber produced a strongminded youth who regarding the tradition as an idle tale went through all the pro-

He pursued his studies until the day arrived when he was to be consecrated a worthy minister of the church. The chapel of Tubber was filled by a congregation eager to witness the solemn ceremony. The bishop and priests took their places in the sacristy; a murmur ran through the congregation—the spell was about to be broken—but just as the sacred vestments were about to be placed on the deserving candidate he swooned away, and was borne from the altar—dead!

RESURRECTIONISTS AND DEAD-WATCHERS.

PAGE 7.

Amongst the many strange customs which our forefather practised that of watching the dead for the space of twenty one nights after interment, has of late years fallen altogether into disuse. A hundred years ago, however, the omission of the posthumous rite would have been looked upon as a sacrilege nor was this national custom associated with any superstitious motive or meaning, for at the time of which the story treats the country was infested with bands of resurrectionists, or "sack-em-ups," as they were indifferently called, who scrupled not to tear the peaceful dead from the graves and have them surreptitiously conveyed to the dissecting-houses of the metropolis, for which they were amply compensated.

In Mr Fitzpatrick's "Lives and Times of Dr Lanigan" (p. 127) we read—"There is a well-known churchyard picturesquely overhanging the village of Dunderum, near Dublin, from the steep sides of which, one might almost expect to see adipocere streaming. Its proximity to the medical schools of the city made it, in a more barbarous but not distant day, a favourite resort with those who effected premature resurrections for the promotion of anatomical study; and on penetrating to the more remote part of the enclosure, one is rather shocked to observe white marble tablets to the memory of dear friends, shattered by the hail of ball and slug which record the many fierce battles between "the dead-watchers" and "sack-em-ups," of which the sexton is old enough to give from experience a spirited description, as well as of the instruments used for the horrible purpose of exhumation and which were more than once captured and preserved as trophies." A foot-note on next page thus briefly describes the *modus operandi*. "A hole, about the circumference of a cheese plate, was rapidly punched, to the depth of five or six feet, at the head of the grave; the upper part of the coffin-lid was then battered in, and a rope, with an iron hook at the end of it lowered, which having adjusted itself under the jaw of the corpse the word of command was given for all hands to pull, and in less

tors. The son of the eminent Dr Kirby, of Harcourt-street, was shot dead on a mission of this character.

FACTION-FIGHTING AND RIBBONISM.

Page 8.

In Dean Cogan's History of the Diocese of Meath, the reader will find an account of the faction-fight at Clonard, in which a priest lost his life endeavouring to quell the riot. Ribbonism was long a favourite though rather expensive policy with the government of this country. Agents and sub-agents, spies and setters were to be found in every parish throughout the nation whose duty it was to "swear in" every ignorant dupe who came in their way, ostensibly for "the good of the country," but in reality to ruin and murder one another whenever occasion offered. At fairs and football matches, at weddings and funerals, the foolish and crafty alike flourished their blackthorns and shouted their party words until the ground reeked with blood. Not more than fifty years ago a cordon of party-men extended from Dublin to Delvin, and another ran parallel at convenient distance. The names of these "patriots" are still recorded in the annals of Dublin Castle.

DOG-FIENDS.

Page 21.

In the mythology of most European countries the dog-fiend is represented as lying in wait for departed souls. According to the Aryan religion the souls of the dead are supposed to ride on the night wind, their howling dogs gathering into their throng the souls of the dying as they pass by their houses. In the North they are called "Gabriel hounds," and their yelping can be heard for miles though they are generally invisible. Even in the present enlightened age the howling of a dog near the house of a sick person is looked upon as an omen of death. This is ascribed on scientific grounds to the animal's keen sense of the odour of approaching dissolution. The superstitious in such matters believe that the dog, like the horse, can see the spirit; and the Irish peasantry are careful not to make any noise when the soul is about to depart in order to baffle the dog-fiends who otherwise would pursue it to the family graveyard.

THE GOBHAN SAER.

This renowned personage is supposed by some to be the builder of the Round Towers and other remarkable edifices. According to one authority St. Maidoc or Aiden, of Cavan, who flourished in the seventh century, desired to build a splendid cathedral, but could not find a trustworthy architect, whereupon he blessed the

formed into a skilful artificer who was known to posterity as the Gobhan Saer. His fame in the line of architecture was such that kings and potentates were anxious to secure his services, and he was the possessor of a wife as wise and skilful as himself. Everybody has heard the legend of how he managed to obtain a suitable partner for his son. The young Gobhan was not very smart, and his father commanded him to carry a sheepskin to the fair and to bring him home "the skin and the price of it." Of course the thoughtless Gobhan Og was laughed at for his simplicity; but a sprightly damsel accepted the offer and returned him the skin "and the price of it," after plucking the wool off. Of course the old man lost no time in securing her for his daughter-in-law.

Young Gobhan was more non-plussed on another occasion when, happening to be travelling in company with his father, the latter desired him to "shorten the road." He was a long time guessing before the idea struck him that the best way to "shorten the road" (or journey) was by telling an interesting story. Ill-fate at last overtook the clever architect. A band of robbers surprised himself and his twelve journeymen, one dark night on a lonely road, and barbarously murdered them. They then proceeded to his house and related the horrible deed to his wife, commanding her to deliver up the money-chest at once. She agreed to point it out to them as soon as she had finished splitting open the trunk of a tree. The robbers volunteered their aid, and placed their hands in the fissure to draw it asunder, when, drawing out a wedge, she left them fastened in the cleft till she had chopped off their heads. According to the *Dublin Penny Journal*, there is an island in the Bog of Allen called "Diere na Bplannc" (the end of the planks) where several stones, bearing carved heads and other devices are pointed out as the tombs of the Gobhan Saer and his twelve journeymen.

BURIED TREASURES AND WARNING DREAMS.

Page 80.

A once popular belief has not yet died out in Ireland that the Danes (properly Twa de Dananns) hid their treasures of gold and silver in the raths and other convenient places whenever they were threatened with an invasion. One of their people was selected to guard every treasure, and in order that time might not affect their vigils they were magically metamorphosed into dogs, cocks, and other animals, the condition of their release depending in a great measure on the will of some Anglicised descendant of their race, who (having been favoured with three warning dreams), failed not to rescue both treasure and guarding gnome according to a prescribed method. Even in the present century the number of persons who have dreamed about

was necessary to conciliate the gnome, in almost every instance by shooting him with a silver sixpence, these precious relics the early colonizers are still reposing in the green raths where they were originally deposited. How often do we see a weak man pointed out whose grandfather literally dreamed him into riches, or whose grandmother surprised a thoughtless heir airing his glittering treasure on a winnowing-sheet, on the summit of a hill! The treasurer-dreamer was careful to note the time when the intimation was accorded to him, for

A dream in the evening the dreamer may rue,

But a dream in the morning is sure to come true.

As a matter of course the more realistic a dream appears deeper the impression it leaves on the mind, thus, to dream of an accident portends a death; it is good to dream of father and mother betokens trouble; horses means success, cattle, ill-luck.

DEATH AND THE SURGEON.

The idea still predominates amongst the illiterate that death is an actual being—an avenging spirit, in form like a human skeleton armed with a phial and scythe. He is visible only to his victim. A purely Celtic legend informs us that a surgeon in the middle ages was so successful in his profession that Death made a compromise with him which empowered him to restore to health any patient at whose bed-side the King of Terrors could not render himself visible. For many years the surgeon respected the covenant, but at length he was induced to break it in favour of a beloved friend whom Death had marked out for destruction. After giving the patient the health-producing draught the surgeon was returning to his home when Death suddenly appeared to him, and informed him that his hour was come and he should die. "I am ready to fulfil that part of our compact, O mighty monarch, but give me time to say a prayer." "Granted—but I trust you will make all haste." "I have my word," said the surgeon, exultingly, "and as you are bound to keep it a prayer shall never cross my lips!" Death disappeared and the doctor considered that his mortal frame was henceforth endowed with immortal life. One day he was proceeding along a bye-way when he descried a child crying beside a stile. He inquired the cause and in reply the child informed him that he was going to be examined in the Christian Doctrine by a catechist, but that he had forgotten the Pater Noster. The surgeon, touched with compassion, agreed to instruct him, and the moment he recited the prayer the child burst into a triumphant laugh and instantly transforming into the shape of Death, he crushed the unfortunate surgeon in a warm embrace.

THE BANSHEE.

Page 52.

The Banshee is a fairy that forewarns members of certain Irish families of their death by wailing in the vicinity of their homes. Sometimes it is accompanied by a *Coach-a-Bower*—a kind of hearse drawn by sable horses and driven by Dullahans or headless men. In some descriptions the Banshee is represented as a thinspare red-haired woman draped in white, but the most authentic account I have heard describes her as of dwarfish stature, golden hair, dressed in red skirt, and devoid of feet. She is continually combing her long tresses, and a youth, who had the temerity to wrest her comb from her, almost died from the effects of her keening before she afforded him an opportunity of restoring it.

FAIRY-LOBE.

The mythology of the fairies is said to have been brought from Arabia by the Troubadours. The name itself is derived from the Latin *fatum* fate, hence the Italian *fata*, applied to a fairy. But the real home of the fairies is in Ireland where they are styled, either through fear or affection, the Good People. They are supposed to be the doubting angels who took neither part in the contest between the Archangel and Lucifer, and being hurled out of heaven are forced to dwell on earth till the last Judgment, when their fate will be decided. Some of them live in communities, others prefer a solitary existence.

The Lepracaun is a dwarfish elf, who works at the shoemaking trade, and may be distinguished by his red cap and green feather. He knows all about hidden treasures; but being a practical joker, he will not reveal them unless threatened with a slow death on the gridiron. Should his captor take his eyes off him for a moment he becomes invisible.

The Cluricaun is the sprite that rides on a boughalaun and makes himself merry in gentlemen's cellars.

The Fear Gurtha throws hungry grass beneath the feet of belated travellers—sometimes guides them to a "stray" sod—or begs at the doors of his peasant neighbours to test their charity.

The Far Darrig, attired in red coat and cap, steals children from their cradles, and leaves sickly elves in their places.

The Leanahan Shee tempts the love of poets by inspiring them. If they refuse she must be their slave, but if they consent, she feeds upon their vitals till they die.

The Pooka is a tricky goat-shaped sprite who haunts wells and taints the fruit.

WITCHES.

Witches are not popular in Ireland now-a-days. They were generally old hags who by the evil power they possessed could charm away butter, or compound love-potions or at most assume the form of a hare and suck the milk from their neighbours' cows before the sunlight touched the dew. There is a story common to every rural district in Ireland of a witch who was surprised in the act by a huntsman, and on being pursued by the dogs fled to a cabin where, having assumed her natural shape, she was discovered spinning, with the blood streaming from a wound in her side.

GHOSTS AND APPARITIONS.

In this materialistic age the belief in apparitions is almost rooted out. We are told they are optical delusions brought on by a peculiar formation of the eye, or disease of the nerves, notwithstanding the innumerable instances of ghost-seeing which have been recorded in every age and country. The soul is the living part of man—its powers are more strongly developed when divested of the body—and we may reasonably conclude that it rests with the Deity alone to prevent it from manifesting itself to mortal eyes. The popular belief is that those who meet with a violent death, who die in enmity with their neighbour, or who journey on to eternity with some important duty unfulfilled, are by Divine decree permitted to solicit the aid of some mortal friend. The Gentry are charitable heretics who are condemned to endure a mild but never-ending Purgatory on earth.

FINIS.