

"Heaven bless you, and don't take that—it's *nothing but a kish!* it's not worth half a farthing to ye, it's falling to pieces; but it's more to me, homeless and houseless as I am, *than thousands—it's nothing but a kish*, but my eldest boy—he, thank Heaven, that's not to the fore to see his father's poverty this day—he slept in it many a long night, when the eyes of his little sister *had not gone among the bright stars of heaven*, but were here to watch over him—it's *nothing but a kish*—yet many a time little Kathleen crowed, and held up her innocent head out of it to kiss her daddy—it's *nothing but a kish*—yet many a day, *in the midst of my slavery*, have I, and my wife, and five as beautiful children as ever stirred a man's heart in his bosom—sat round it, and eat the praytie and salt out of it, fresh and wholesome; and when I had my *six blessings* to look on, it's little I cared for the slavery a poor Irishman is born to:—it's *nothing but a poor kish*—but it's been with me full, and it's been with me empty, for many a long year, and it's used to me, *it knows my troubles*, for since the bed was sold from under us, for the last gale, what else had we to keep our heads from the cold earth? For the love of Heaven, have mercy on a poor, weak, houseless man; don't take the last dumb thing he cares for—*sure it's nothing but a kish.*"

No matter for the insignificance of the object, the pathos of this is felt at once; it is hardly necessary to describe the scene or the actors therein, the words carry their own meaning with them. The trust of the poor Irish in the protecting care of the Almighty is uppermost in all their troubles; their faith in His wisdom is never shaken. When tried in a manner that would drive a Frenchman to his charcoal, and an Englishman to the river or the rope, we have seen Paddy's eyes—eyes that have ceased to feel the luxury of tears—uplifted to heaven, and heard him murmur, "Well to be sure, His will be done! He sent the sore trouble on us, but His will be done!"

During a country scroll, in one of the green *bolreens*, or little bridle roads, that intersect the country, we came, not long ago, most unexpectedly upon a love-making young couple, seated on the stump of an old tree. It was the hour of early mass, and Phelim and Peggy should have been there instead of love-making. Phelim had a self-confident, roguish aspect, that we did not quite like; but then he appeared very much in earnest, and that was something: the girl had the sweet, confiding look, which goes straight to the heart of an honourable man.—"Where's the good Phelim," she answered, to one of those appeals made with all the full, rich sweetness of the *soft* Irish brogue, interspersed with that delicious *cushla machreeing* which the translation, "*pulse of my heart*," but feebly expresses: "where's the good of feeding up a poor girl like myself, *that never saw the sunshine of a mother's smile?* Where's the good, Phelim, of feeding her up, with false music?"

The womanly helplessness of the picture is perfected by the observation of the girl "who never saw the sunshine of a mother's smile;" and the comparison of love-making to "sweet music" is exquisite.

It may be as well to add, that the following Sunday after mass, we met Peggy, blushing to be sure, but leaning with the self-satisfied propriety and confidence of a bride upon the arm of her Phelim, whose music now had not a false note in it.

Irish words of endearment are the very soul of tenderness. "*Marourneen dheelish*" is a warm, ripe, rich expression of affection, which "My sweet darling" fails to translate. "*Tick machree*," or "Son of my heart," is a beautiful phrase. But we could proceed, at this rate, much longer than might be interesting to our readers. We cannot refrain from mentioning the "*Keen*," or cry over the dead body of those who were beloved in their life-time. The dramatic effect of the "*Keen*" is very powerful; the crowd of persons, the darkness of the death chamber, illumined only by the candles that glare upon the corpse, the murmur and repetition that runs round when the "*keen*" gives out a sentence—the deep, yet suppressed, sob of the near relatives—and the stormy, uncomfortable cry of the widow or bereaved husband, when allusion is made to the domestic virtues of the deceased, heighten its effect; but in the open air, when the funeral of a priest, or some person greatly beloved and respected, winds through a mountain pass, and the *keen*, swelled by the voice of "the people," is flung upon the mountain echoes, it has magnificent effect. Several *keens*, or "Irish death songs," are before us. We select one, which professes to be a translation from the Irish:

"Thou wast dearer to me than the rays of the declining sun; and when I turn my eyes on him, the thought of thee brings sorrow to my soul! Thou wast like him in thy youth, with the soft blush on thy cheek: like him at midday, thou shone in the splendour of manhood! But early was thy fate clouded with misfortune, and thou hast sunk beneath it; nor shalt thou rise again like him.

"Cold and silent is now thy repose!"

"Thou wast to me as the nerve of my throbbing heart! For thy sake only was this world dear. Thou wast brave; thou wast generous; thou wast just; thou wast loved by all! But why look back on thy virtues?—why recall those scenes to memory? They are no more to be beheld, for he whose they were has passed away; he is gone for ever, to return no more!

"Cold and silent is now thy repose!"

We remember ourselves once hearing the "*keen*" of "a brother of a boy,"—a fine brave fellow too, but who, for all that, richly deserved the fate which he escaped by being accidentally shot. Some

expressions used by the wild-looking woman, are worth recording: nor was her appearance less extraordinary than her words. A red silk handkerchief partly confined her black and shining hair, which, without such restraint, would have fallen over her shoulders; her eyes were those deep-set Irish greys, which are almost peculiar to the country, and are capable of every expression, from the bitterest hatred and the direst revenge, to the softest and warmest affection; so extraordinary were those eyes that we remember nothing of her face but them. Her long blue cloak was confined at her throat, but not so closely as to prevent the outline of her figure being seen; when she arose, as if by sudden inspiration, and tossed her arms wildly above her head, continuing the chaunt in a more earnest and animated manner, and using every variety of attitude to enforce her description of the virtues and good qualities of the deceased.

"Swift and sure was his foot," she said "on hill and valley. His shadow struck terror to his foes; he could look the sun in the face like an eagle; and the 'wheel' of his shillela through the air was fast and terrible as the lightning. There had been full and plenty in his father's house, and the traveller never left it empty; but the tyrants had taken all, except his heart's blood—and that they took at last. The girls of the mountain might cry by the running streams, and weep the flower of the country! but he would return no more. He was the last of his father's house; but his people were many, both in hill and valley, and they would revenge his death!"

A SKETCH FOUNDED ON FACT.

"Well, will they fight?"

"Fight! yes, indeed. They can't avoid it. Free love must challenge, after what has passed, and of course Henderson won't refuse, for the same reason."

"Well, there's no necessity for these things," said I, "nobody can persuade me, either of the utility or propriety of duelling. I'll never acknowledge it, nor will I ever fight."

"How would you avoid it in a case like the present?"

"I don't know yet what this is."

"Don't! Why it's all over town. Henderson went to Mrs. L's party last evening, with Miss A. In the course of the evening he went to the refreshment room, where Free love, in the midst of a crowd of gentlemen, made some remark concerning Miss A. which Henderson felt himself called upon to contradict; and he did so rather abruptly. Free love, who is quick as touch-paper, took fire directly, and gave him 'the lie.' Every one expected a row, but Henderson, after leisurely swallowing a mouthful of coffee from the cup he held, turned to Free love and said, very quietly, 'I shall not interrupt the party to give you the chastisement you deserve, but I pronounce you to be, for what you have said of Miss A. a liar and slanderer, and if you are not a coward also, you will demand the satisfaction of a gentleman; which, if you do not demand, I shall, for your language to me, give you a caning the next time I see you.' He then coolly finished his coffee and re-entered the dancing rooms, where he talked and danced all the evening as if nothing had happened. Every body thinks Free love will be shot, he's so quick and Henderson so cool. But Free love's remark was certainly most unjustifiable,—he deserves something severe. Now, how would you have gotten out of such a scrape without a challenge?"

"Knocked Free love down, to be sure."

"Then he'd have challenged you."

"Perhaps so; but why do you tell me all this so particularly?"

"Because your services as surgeon will be required on the ground. There'll be need I assure you—sharp work before they're done."

"I've no wish to witness a scene that I disapprove of, and I am unwilling—"

"Don't be hasty now. I am very anxious to have you present, for more reasons than one. Indeed you must consent to accompany us."

"To do what!—accompany you?"

"To tell the truth, then, the challenge has already passed. I am Henderson's friend, and I beg of you not to refuse. It's by Henderson's wish that I ask you. Besides, I wish you to be present for your own sake."

"How so?"

"To change your opinion of duelling."

"More likely to confirm it,—but, I'll be with you. When and where is it?"

"To-morrow morning at six—hang it, I see no use in getting up so early to be shot, but Henderson would have it so—out near T——."

We were on the ground, the morning was foggy, and our coachman had like to have lost his way and driven us two miles from the right place. A pretty story that would have been to set down to Henderson's credit. However, it luckily did not happen, and we reached the appointed spot two minutes after the opposite party. The seconds advanced immediately and entered upon their duties. There was a high, white-washed fence running along near us, which, about fifty yards off, took a short angle to the right. The ground was measured off parallel to the fence, and while this was doing, I took a look at the principals.

Free love was dressed in a blue coat, and grey pants, with a vest of black. This at once told me he was no duellist, and that his second was no better. Henderson I knew to be a first rate shot and no novice in the present business. But these were not his only advantages: he was as cool and calm, as if totally unconcerned in the affair, while a glance at his opponent shewed him to be fidgeting and excited, even nervously so,—not by any means from cowardice, (for we all knew he would behave well) but from anger and his own violent disposition. Henderson was dressed entirely in black, even to his black satin shirt bosom; but his quiet air, his total unconcern, and more than all, his after conduct, forbade the supposition of his having, in this, taken advantage of his superior experience in these affairs.

It was agreed by the seconds, among other preliminaries, that the parties might fire as soon or as slow as they pleased, after the signal was given. The ground was measured, (twelve paces) the principals took their stations, and Henderson's second (to whom the throwing up of a piece of coin had allotted the privilege of giving the signal) placed himself between the combatants, sufficiently out of the line of fire to form the third angle of a triangle, while I made the triangle of a square by taking position directly opposite my friend's second, and equi-distant from either principal. The signal was given and Free love fired instantly, but missed. I turned to Henderson, who had thus risked his life for the sake, as any one would suppose, of a better aim at his antagonist. He was standing there as coolly as ever, with his pistol cocked in his hand, and as he raised his familiar weapon to a level with his opponent's breast, his dark eye all the while fixed sternly on Free love, (who, to do him justice, stood this fearful trial well) I almost involuntarily closed my eyes, for I knew his bullet would be fatal. I was mistaken. He paused a moment, then muttered to himself, loud enough though for all to hear, "who'd have thought a scoundrel could be a brave man," and then fired in the air.

Free love's face from pale became scarlet. I never saw a man so angry. "Do you call this the satisfaction of a gentleman?" shouted he furiously. "I demand another shot."

The seconds looked at each other, and at Henderson. "Certainly," said the latter, with a look of the most sovereign contempt at Free love. I now regretted having come, for I was certain one would fall, and perhaps both. Henderson's manner told me too plainly that he would not again fire in the air. But here we met an unlooked-for interruption. Two or three carriages came in view, (for it was now rapidly clearing) driving along the road at a rapid rate, and a short distance behind appeared a long train of heavy waggons. So there was no alternative but to wait for half an hour, (no pleasant idea under any circumstances in the early damp air, and rendered still more irksome by the almost certainty that we should have a corpse to carry home at the end of the time) or to change the ground. Free love's impatience at once suggested the latter. So it was determined to retire behind the sudden angle of the high white fence above mentioned.

The seconds proceeded to measure the ground afresh. And by some oversight, the former line of direction was not changed; so that now, instead of the line of fire being parallel to the fence, it was at right angles with it. The consequence of this mistake (which the experience of the seconds, Free love and myself, prevented our noticing, and which Henderson's carelessness and contempt for his opponent hindered him from observing) was, that one of the principals, Henderson, had to stand with his back to the fence.

The word was given:—"Are you ready?—One—two—three—fire!" Both pistols went off at the same moment, making but one report. Free love uttered a scream of pain that drew his second and myself immediately to his side. Henderson's ball, so true was his aim, had struck the middle fingers of his left hand, crushing them, bone and all, against the stock of his pistol, which alone saved his life. He had no other wound. The finding this out did not take two seconds, not half so long as the relating of it has, and I turned instantly to look at Henderson, who had made no noise, and whom we supposed unwounded. To my surprise he was lying motionless on the damp earth, and his second (who had at first supposed him untouched, and on seeing him fall had sprung toward him, but too late to prevent his falling,) leaning, with a horror-stricken face over the body. I was by him in a moment. His right temple was crushed in—Free love's bullet had gone through his brain—he was stone dead.

The age-like silence of a few minutes that followed, a silence of regret and agony with all concerned, was broken by the voice of a new comer. We looked up, and what was my astonishment to see young Lieutenant A. who had just arrived unexpectedly from Europe, heard the particulars of the affair and its intended settlement, and had started for the duel ground to take his sister's quarrel in his own hands, and prevent the risk of the life of his best friend—his future brother-in-law: for Miss A. and Henderson were to have been married in a month.

A's first exclamation, when he saw the corpse, was—"Merciful Heaven! can all this be reality?" But as his blanched face glanced from the body to the ground, its expression changed instantaneously. "Why, who measured off this ground?" said he, in a voice of anger and amazement. "Who placed this man dressed in black, against this white fence?—whoever did is guilty of his blood!"