

AILEY MOORE

TALE OF THE TIMES SHOWING HOW VICTIMS, MURDER AND SUICIDE PARTISANS ARE MANAGED AND JUSTICE ADMINISTERED IN IRELAND TOGETHER WITH MANY STIRRING INCIDENTS IN OTHER LANDS

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CHAPTER VIII

HOW SHAUN A DHERK CONSULTS FOR THE PEACE OF THE COUNTRY, AND MR. JOYCE SNAPPER LOSES THE BOND

On the following evening, just when the hand of the clock on Mr. Snapper's mantelpiece was pointing to twenty minutes past ten, there were three heavy knocks heard at or on Mr. Snapper's hall door.

Mr. Joyce Snapper had, at the moment, taken off his cravat and put on his dressing-gown. For a very considerable period Mr. Snapper had been accustomed to put on his dressing-gown when he expected any stranger—for dressing-gowns are quite a modish kind of garment, and Mr. Snapper thought he "looked well" in it.

"Savvy! Dhis shing!" cried Jude, in the kitchen—for Jude's horror was night visitors. In fact, she had nearly lost her life by them twice already, as John and herself had been on these occasions put upon Snapper's knees to produce Mr. Joyce Snapper's person, and only saved themselves by producing Mr. Snapper's gun, and swearing their book oaths that Mr. Snapper himself had received a sudden call to some place, of which they—Jude and John—knew nothing, only the direction.

"Shian-riaghe!" said John in a low voice, and looking out under his eyelids, as if he feared to see the new comer present himself in the ceiling. "Aisth!" answered Jude in the same voice.

Three knocks, heavier than the preceding, were heard, and John seized the poker. Jude was starting for the barn.

"What the h—ll are ye about these downstair? Gone to sleep, and so on, as usual? John! John! I say—" "Choke yer grander neck!" prayed John, only not loud. "Yis, sir," he continued, "the's dreadful rappin', faith sir," he said, going to the foot of the staircase; and—

"Open the hall door, you cowardly spalpeen," said Mr. Joyce Snapper. "Open the hall door, and don't be there like a dog in a sack, and so on; a nice defender of the house, and so forth, we have."

John stood rebuked, and happily reassured; for John knew Mr. Joyce Snapper sufficiently to believe there was nothing to be feared when Mr. Joyce Snapper was outrageous.

Knock! knock! knock! again; but this time John is just opening the door. John's heart "rose up to his mouth," as he said himself when he saw the person that stood outside. In fact, only two things prevented him from catching the intruder by the neck—for John had his own intentions and his own views about the country.

The two things were, that he was afraid to use it, and that he was afraid to do it. John suspected that the fellow whom he had that moment looked upon was an informer, for he had seen him at the house two or three times before, and at the same unseasonable hour.

The visitor was Shaun a Dherk, who came to give his assistance in "doing justice," and in "pacifying the country."

Mr. Joyce Snapper stood at the top of the staircase, and recognized his friend. "Let in that man," cried Mr. Joyce Snapper.

"Yis, sir," answered John. "Benacht Dhis arvi!" said Shaun, as he moved across the threshold. "God's blessing on you!" "Dhia as Mbuire goith," John answered mechanically, not heartily. "God and Mary with you!" for the Irish salutation is always repaid by something more than it gives. But John, as has been intimated, most sadly belied the reply on his lips, by the curse inside his teeth.

"Och, but ye're the han'some boy, sure!" said Shaun, as he passed by the servant.

did like, at night, to stand between two candles and view himself in his mirror; and then he tossed his hair most fantastically, and looked numberless times at his teeth, and flung open his vest, and looked at the studs in his shirt, and at his eyes and eyebrows, and front face and side face; and very naturally Mr. Snapper concluded, that if he was not a handsome man, he was a smart looking, interesting person, and worthy of any respectable match; particularly, considering the "cold thousands" he had laid by.

It is very wonderful either, that Shaun a Dherk found Mr. Snapper only just seated in his arm-chair, his arms folded in a tree, gentleman-like way, and one leg thrown over the other. Moreover, on his feet were two very red slippers.

Let us not omit, however, to mention, that just as Shaun placed his foot on the lowest step of the stairs, and as Mister John was about closing the hall-door, a man appeared approaching the house, who beckoned his hand very familiarly, and nodded his head very knowingly, and made certain movements with the palm of his right hand towards the earth, all of which signified that John was to wait for him a little, and that he (John) would not be sorry for it if he did.

The image of Mary Fling rose up in John's imagination, and the images of £50 and four milch cows, which her grand-uncle had left her, and which some fortune teller was destined to receive with herself, so he waited for the new comer, whom he rightly judged to be the showman, who showed people "London, an' a power o' places abroad." Shaun a Dherk looked like one who would have a long sit above stairs. It was quite reasonable that John, Jude, and the showman should have a pleasant sit below.

And, in fact, so they had—for the showman was the identical "north countryman," with the large nose and large grey eyes, and heavy eyebrows and thick lips, that the whole barony was speaking of. Several religious people gave him an innocent people, however, for he had a lantern, and when he darkened the room, he brought out upon a sheet, before which he placed the lantern, a great variety of places and persons,—the Devil and the Miller; being some of the latter. Besides, he was known to have told the fortunes of several with great exactness; it was even said that he foretold robberies, housebreakings, and murders on themselves; but of course, only "dark clouds on the house," or as a "red hand guiding the man's soul along a dark way," or as "something good to happen, which he could not exactly see." Young people welcomed and feared the "north countryman" and old people, as we have intimated, would have nothing to do with him; but all admitted that when he came the way he never ate his bit—and for that purpose often opened his wallet in a poor woman's cabin, where he left more than men that came there in their jaunting-cars or their carriages. That was Mr. Brian McCann.

Mr. Joyce Snapper welcomed Shaun a Dherk very patronizingly of course; and as he was in his "best style," he sat with the light full upon his face—upon his shirt-bosom, and upon his grey pantaloons and red slippers. Shaun a Dherk through humility, and because he wasn't in any style at all, would rather sit "over near the window," if his honor "per meened;" and as Mr. Snapper made no objection, the minor detail was arranged.

"Well, Shaun, how goes the world, as the saying is—oh? Gone regularly through the affair, and so on?" And Mr. Snapper smiled—a very meaning smile—and looked at least one hundred ways in one half-minute of time. He had an advantage in his eyes, the reader is aware.

"In troth, yer honor, I done a grate dale, an' I hope yer honor will consider me, fur I am a poor man, yer honor, you know."

"What does Shanahan say?" "Och, by coorse, he made a poor mouth, an' he said his owdest boy was in the favor, God bless the bearers! an' his owdest father was sick, an' he had the money, an' so he couldn't."

"Couldn't and all that, Shaun, eh? Couldn't?" "Faith, yis—he couldn't. The place looked poor, sure enough—an' 'twasn't like the house o' Shanahan's a bit, an' tellin' the truth!"

"Well, Shaun, is that your news—confound it!—and he couldn't—couldn't—I know—then he'll march as the saying is—the rogue's march. He'll march, if he was to carry his father's coffin in the cart, and his son sitting upon it—he'll march—march," cried Mr. Joyce Snapper, indignantly.

"I hinted that, yer honor," returned Shaun a Dherk. "And I told him that 'twas better fur 'im to offer, because yer honor couldn't ax id—but he shuk his head, melancholy-like, an' he looked in sorrow."

"So I said I was sorry for 'im, an' I was goin' away, when he called me back agin. 'Shaun, 'sis he, 'wur you spakin' to the agint?' 'Me?' 's'is I, 'Spakin' to the agint?' Di ye think his honor 'ud spake to the likes o' me?" "Well," says he, 'Shaun, what'll I do—what'll I do?' 'I'll take all my stock—every bit uv it—to pay all that money, Shaun; an' then—oh one!—not a drop o' milk to feed the owd or the young—an' the poor owd man that never shuk his dure agin any one, he'll be hungry—the father that reared me Shaun."

"Well, all that's very good, and so forth—we all know—well!"

"Arrah! yer honor, faith, I was near cryin' myself, so I was—case you know—Mich have the name of bein' a good son to th' owd people, an' I'm growin' owd now," said Shaun, with a sigh. "But to make a long story short, yer honor, he looked round the owd house—he was born in the little room where's th' owd father yer honor—an' I saw he wouldn't fly from the nest. 'My father's heart will break,' he said, 'if I'm turned out; an' he hasn't long to stay wud us now.' An' th' in he passed, yer honor. 'Yis, 'sis he, 'buy the renewal of the lease, and the son of owd Paddy Shanahan will have enough left to berry his father; an' th' in he can go out wud his childer an' his wife to beg.' 'Yis—yis,' he said, 'my father shan't never know—never!' He'll be here to-morrow, yer honor."

"Shaun, you are 'Solomon the Wise,' as the saying is; Shaun, there's a golden rule for you, an' that is, 'Thank yer honor—yer honor does serves all I'm doin', an' I'll do more, please God.'"

"The remains of that Hynes family—and so on—is a great bother; but the vagabond always pays up."

"Och, sure, nothin' is asier than the way yer honor knows."

"What way? asked Mr. Snapper, with quite a complacent smile. "Faith, then, yer honor, 'tisn't I would be better than yer honor, I'm sure. But you know, yer honor, 'tis parities that way that disturbs the pace o' the country always. Little bits o' howldin's that can't stand; an' th' in they want to get a change, some-how, an' all that; an' th' in they join the 'torries' an' the 'boys' you see: whin all the time, if the land was together, the place 'ud be full o' respectable people, an' we'd have pace an' quietness."

"Shaun, you speak like a man of sense."

"Och yis, yer honor; an' that's the reason you put the powder in that beggarman's son's thatch, that he was transported fur."

"Me?—eh?—what do you mean?—what do you mean, eh?" "Och, yer honor," Shaun replied, in a low, confidential tone. "Sure Grimes an' I wur hand-and-glove, an' I know'd all of it."

Mr. Joyce Snapper looked full at Shaun, and Shaun looked as open and candid as the sky. Mr. Snapper was quite red this time, and he turned away from the candles a little, —a very prudent course, indeed, —but Mr. Snapper said nothing, —he felt as if the beggarman knew everything and every one. He could kill Shaun, and he might attempt it,—the thought struck him; but to dispute with him was impossible. Shaun knew too much, and he looked like adamant, Shaun did.

"An', yer honor," Shaun continued, as if nothing at all had occurred, "I had something about another that you know; faith, this house would look handsome if a body knew what there! I had something that brings home the foul murderer o' Mr. Sherin."

Mr. Joyce Snapper absolutely stood up. He looked like a man blackening up for death. Shaun spoke in so solemn a tone—it looked like accusation.

"Di you want anything, yer honor?" said Shaun, very solicitous. "Can I do anything fur yer honor?" he asked.

"Nothing—nothing. Well, Shaun, you were saying something, and so on."

"I was, sir—yis I was. Gerald Moore can be convicted by evidence."

"Not true, Shaun."

And Mr. Joyce Snapper's heart dilated, and his chest stretched proudly forth, when he said to Shaun a Dherk,—

"Shaun, be easy on that matter—you're wrong—I have that bond."

Shaun shook his head. "I have, Shaun; I have that bond, I say!"

Shaun put out his hands, and shook them. "A mistake," said Shaun—"a mistake. Ax the people. Shaun a Dherk is always right. You have a copy, may be."

"No."

Mr. Joyce Snapper, more proudly still—a little indignantly, in fact—rose from his chair, and rapidly went to a desk—an old fashioned standing mahogany desk. There stood the venerable piece of furniture, with all its brass handles up to the front, and its broad polished breast. It was against the wall beside the mantel-piece. The bell-pull hung just near it.

Mr. Joyce Snapper slowly opened the desk; and having put in his hand, without any search, at once—tenderly, ever so tenderly—he took out a piece of parchment. The parchment was nicely rolled and taped—with red tape. Solemnly, rather, he undid the knot and unrolled the parchment. He brought it over to Shaun.

"Now?" said he. "The copy," said Shaun. "Why, you omadawn, as they say, I'm one of her majesty's attorney at law. Look at the names, Shaun! Look here!" And he spread the paper broadly over the table.

Shaun a Dherk rose. He stood right between the candles and the window blind, until his figure was perfectly defined upon it; and he struck his stick on the floor as he made a step towards the table.

As Shaun looked over the parchment, there was a shriek from the kitchen which startled Mr. Snapper, and apparently very much startled Shaun a Dherk.

"What's that?" said Shaun. "Mr. Snapper, like a courageous man, rushed to the door; but like a cautious man, he stood there. Shaun a Dherk, like a pious man, went on his knees to say his prayers. Having listened for a moment, and heard nothing below, Mr. Snapper was gaining courage, and really opened the door to go down stairs. But at the same moment the window of the drawing room was raised as if by magic.

Mr. Snapper's heart sank—he rushed towards the end of the room and cried "Thieves!"

Shaun a Dherk roared "Murder!" And the people below stairs were crying out anything and everything, but no one paid them any attention. The barrel of a brass blunderbuss now made its appearance at the open window, and was soon followed by the owner, or the bearer, Mr. Snapper's blood curdled in his heart—he thought his hour had come.

Mr. Snapper shook from head to foot. He pushed closer to Shaun a Dherk, who still muttered his low "Och one!"

There was an awful silence. The heart of Mr. Joyce Snapper thumped so loudly at his breast, that it was audible through the whole room.

Having engaged himself for some minute or two about the old desk, and muttered some other threats and curses, the assassin went down stairs. He was determined to be secure. The servants were first to die, or to be prevented from giving the alarm. What moments these were to Mr. Joyce Snapper and to Shaun a Dherk?

However five minutes passed, and no one was heard returning; ten minutes passed, and no one came; a quarter of an hour, and steps were heard at a distance—a measured tread it was, and of more than one. Steadily, steadily, the steps approached the end-agent's house.

A gleam of hope—he knew not why—shot into the soul of Mr. Joyce Snapper.

At length the steps were heard on the walk approaching the door; and then at the door, and then in the hall, and then on the stairs. There was scrambling, and tumbling, and cursing, in the hurry; but Mr. Snapper recognized the voices of the police.

"Hurra!" cried the land agent. "Hurra!" he cried again. "Here! here!" he cried.

"God save the Queen!" cried Shaun a Dherk.

Caps knocked against the door-frame, and bayonet scabbards against the door, and guns made a frightful noise as they were "grounded" on the floor; and during all the time Mr. Joyce Snapper was laughing—laughing immoderately. He was almost beside himself with joy—a thing not very surprising, we should think, considering the time he has had.

"Why, Mr. Snapper," said the sergeant of police, "here is dreadful work indeed. Where are you? Johnston will you strike a light. So! Thunders!" cried the sergeant, when he beheld the pair of captives. "Thunders! but the rascals have left you in an awful pickle, sir."

There was no resisting the impulse to a simultaneous roar of laughter. "Desk rifled!" said the corporal. "Devil mend him!" said a private, in a side whisper to another who answered, "Am!"

Meanwhile Mr. Joyce Snapper was liberated, much to his comfort. He was so rejoiced, that for a moment he did not dream of his losses.

Shaun a Dherk came beside him, and gave him a nudge. "Let the polis folly him," whispered Shaun.

"A hundred pounds—for his capture!" cried Snapper. "Has he long gone?" "Not a quarter of an hour," replied Snapper.

stood still for a moment, and raised their eyes to heaven—reverently taking off their hats.

"'Twas well done!" remarked the eldest—not him could be done better. "Gh, me yer hand, awic—that's an honest hand, an' th's an honest heart behind it."

He took a fine looking young man by the right hand.

"Send by a sure man the money to the Shanahans," the same individual continued, "an' lave the owd man die in his cabin, an' the good son berry his father in pace. You'll make yer fortune by the peelers," he said, turning to the other, "after all ye did last night."

"But ain't the three guns I bought—ain't they angels tho'?" asked the man the man last spoken to.

"An' you'll go back for your lantern to the squire's, won't you?" "Oh, ay, faith will I," was the reply; and for the reward to the police-office. Wha' fra no'?"

"You're an honest man," said the speaker, solemnly, "an' a man uv courage. Well, boys," he concluded, "I go on the business of our poor owd country. She have only us—God help 'er. Ye know where we meet. The agint have a bit of his reward—and I have the bond—thank God!" And they separated.

TO BE CONTINUED

JOHN CARSTAIRS' STORY

The night was wild and stormy, just as the day had been a day of windy violence.

All day long the northwester had blown with terrible force, bringing with it sheets of rain, and lashing the sea into fury. A miserable gloomy day had given place to a wild and stormy night, and yet we four were gathered in the old spot at Muizenburg, for notwithstanding the weather we never missed Thursday night with our great friend, Pat Mooney.

To-night it was impossible to sit under the veranda even though it was on the sheltered side of the house, but we remained in the dining room with the window open where we could discern the raging waters and hear the whistling of the wind as it tore round the corners of the house.

Old John Carstairs, usually talkative, full of humor and anecdotes, sparkling with wit, was strangely silent. He kept his gaze upon the water, withdrawing it only occasionally to fix it on a corner of the room where hung a beautiful picture of Mary the "Star of the Sea." Without a note of warning of his intention he suddenly raised his hand and imposed silence on the group. Then he began.

"I never see the ocean in storm, not even in its fiercest grandeur, but it brings to me a message of peace. It brings of years ago at once sweet and sorrowful.



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