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CROHOORE OF THE BILL-HOOK.

BY JOHN BANIM. CHAPTER XX.

We have detailed the manner in which, a few hours before Pierce Shea was let out for execution, Crohoore fell into the hands of Paddy Loughman, and under the lock and key, bolt and bar, of Matthew, the grim jailor. It was the very last day of the assizes, and he was almost immediately arraigned and tried on charge of having murdered his master and mistress, and their poor female servant. All those requisite as witnesses were in Kilkenny, to be present at the execution of Shea, and not a moment's indulgence was thought necessary towards a wretch who stood accused of crimes so monstrous. The trial rapidly went on; the chain of evidence was conclusive. The fact of his sharpening the bill-hook on the night of the murder; the quarrel, and the blow given him by his master, which, operating on a nature so dark and misanthropic, seemed the immediate cause for a vengeance that had been long threatened, or at least indirectly alluded to; the marks of feet on the litter at the stable-door, exactly corresponding with the pair of old brogues found after him; the print of bloody fingers on the hasp, as he went in to steal the horse; and, finally, the encounter with him on that horse, as he bore away the wretched daughter of his wretched victims; nothing, exclusive of the testimony of an actual witness of the bloody scene, could be more convincing; and Crohoore-na-bilhoge stood convicted, to the satisfaction of a crowded and abhorring court, of a cruel and hideous murder of two human beings. When the verdict was returned, without the jury leaving their box, there even arose a murmur of approbation, louder than the decencies of a court of justice could at any time admit.

He had called no witnesses; he had examined none of those produced against him; he had made no shadow of defence; his face, during the trial had undergone no change; and, on the contrary, as the whole terrible detail proceeded, he was observed to stare about him with a careless and hardened air: and Mewawl, or Mickie, whom the reader will please to recollect as one of his first acquaintances at the wake, and who was now, notwithstanding all his horror of the crimes committed, rather an unwilling witness, made his own shrewd surmises, whispering to a neighbor, 'that it was nonsense from beginning to ending; Crohoore-na-bilhoge 'ud never be hanged; because he had them for his friends that war well able to snap him from among forty regiments of red-coats, in spite of their bayonets.'

At the moment of his conviction, something like a spasm of terror shot, however, across the wretch's uncouth features; and, as if to hide from all that looked on him the evidence of emotion, he bent his head and rested it on the front of the dock.

After going over the usual preamble in a mumbling voice, the clerk of the crown called out, in a rather more distinct pronunciation—'Crohoore-na-bilhoge, otherwise Cornelius Field, what have you to say why sentence of death and execution should not be pronounced upon you?' and a pin might be heard to drop in the crammed court, as the convicted murderer slowly raised his head from the edge of the dock, and looking with a composed eye around him, finally fixed it upon the judge, who, his little black cap put on, sat ready to pronounce the law's dread sentence.

All shrank from that cool and assured look; given, as it was, by a creature of such revolting physiognomy, and who stood branded with murder of the most appalling kind; a general drawing of breath told the general shudder, and the seated judge himself, as the deep red eye fastened on his, was scarcely able to hold the solemn self-command of his features. For a moment the dwarf did not speak; and, whilst he remained silent, hasty whispers flew from one to another of the crowd. 'What a murderous face he had!—how expressive of his acts and his nature?' was the common remark, fearfully communicated. No spark of pity touched the breast of one human being that gazed upon him. He opened his large bloodless lips to speak, and the silence became breathless.

'My lord the judge,' he said, in a steady and not unmelodious voice—it was nature's sole gift to a being she seemed otherwise to have formed in aversion; and the unquailing tone slowly rolled over the deep pause.

'My lord the judge, go on; I stand here to listen to your sentence; nothing have I to say against it; my time to spake is not yet to come; you will tell me I must hang like a dog upon the gallows;—but—a grim smile crossed his features—the skibbeeah's fingers will never be laid on my neck; do your duty, my lord the judge; your words cannot harm me; no more have I to say.'

Another murmur of astonishment and terror arose; some there were that trembled, and the great presiding magistrate himself again felt an impression for which he could not account.

While the criminal stood undaunted and fearless, his whole appearance in unison with his words, the judge, after some moments, began to pass sentence.

'Cornelius Field,' he said, 'you have been found guilty, by a jury of your country, of a cool and deliberate murder; and one of a character the most frightful that ever shocked a court of justice; language cannot express the enormity of your guilt. You have cruelly and savagely taken away the lives of your benefactors; of those who found you a deserted, helpless infant; who saved you from the perishing death to which you were left exposed; who nurtured you as their child; brought you up in their own house; gave you to drink of their own cup, to eat of their own bread, and to sit at their own fireside.'

At this part of the address, tears started into the convict's eyes, and the hectic struggle of some great and overpowering emotion warped his disagreeable features; he brushed the tears away with one hand; bent his head on the other; and, when he again looked up, his face was calm as before. The judge continued—

'You have deluged with blood the hearth that so long cheered you, and with the blood of your generous protectors; and, for all kindnesses and charities received, you have brought down woe in every shape on their happy and hospitable roof. For it also appears, and in the crime you further stand convicted, that you have torn from the home, drenched in her parents' blood, the miserable and only child of your victims. In my long experience of the horrors of a court of justice, no such criminal as you has ever stood before me; you are out of the pale of men;—human nature shudders to behold you. Prepare for a terrible and prompt reckoning. But, before I proceed to pass upon you the sentence of the law, I would, for your soul's sake, earnestly advise you to offer to an outraged God, and a detesting world, by restoring—if she yet lives—the probably ruined creature you have carried off, the only slight propitiation it is in your power now to make.'

'I will restore her,' interrupted the culprit, slowly and deliberately.

'Do so; and heaven give you the grace to keep that expressed resolution during the very short space of time allotted on this earth. The sentence of the court is, that you be taken from the place whence you came, and in one hour—'

'In one hour?' again interrupted the wretch, at last completely thrown off his guard, and clasping his hands in evident terror and confusion—'in one hour my judge!—oh, be more merciful—I can do nothing in one short hour—I cannot keep my promise.'

A person, who leaned against the lower part of the side of the dock, here turned his face half round to observe the prisoner, and Crohoore, suddenly changing his manner, darted his body over the barrier, and with the ferocity and certainty of a wild beast, clutched him by the breast; and—'Help, help, give help, here!' he roared. The court became a scene of confusion:—'He will murder the man!' was the universal cry.

The judge called loudly on the sheriff to quell the tumult, and restrain the maniac violence of the desperate culprit, ere mischief could be done—and that officer, not being himself a very athletic, courageous, or active person, ran to collect the force in attendance. Matthew, the jailor, who occupied his usual place on the barrier, between the outer and inner docks, strove, with all his might, to tear away the hands of the dwarf from the breast of the person he held;—but the gripe was kept with almost superhuman force. The man himself, a powerful and athletic figure, exerted himself to the utmost. At first he pushed with his arms against the side of the dock, and swung out from his captor; then he was seen to snatch a pistol from his bosom, and, ere hindrance could be offered, he fired it in Crohoore's face; but from their struggling, the shot took no effect; glancing upward, fortunately for the spectators, also, and striking near the ceiling of the court-house. Then Crohoore redoubled his efforts. Hitherto he had stood on a form, placed in the dock to elevate him sufficiently before the eyes of the court; from this, he jumped into the body of the dock; there, still holding firmly to his man, flung himself down—and, by the hanging weight of his body, unwittingly assisted, indeed, by Matthew's continued tuggings, as well as by the amazing power of his own arms, actually succeeded in dragging over the wooden bar the object of his unaccountable hostility.

Both rolled on the ground within the dock and a dreadful scuffle went on between them.—The man fastened his hands on Crohoore's throat and the dwarf was nearly suffocated. Again he cried out for help; and—

'Ho, ho,' he continued, half choking,—'my lord the judge, give your orders to seize upon this man—I'll have more than an hour now,

if a friend is as lucky as I am—help, or he is gone—he chokes me, to keep down my words—save him—for this is the murderer of the Doolings.'

'Yes, sir,' exclaimed Mr. B., rushing in, and addressing the sheriff, who had just re-entered with his force; 'here is your warrant for the apprehension of that man; as a magistrate of your county, I commit him to your charge.'

'Thanks to your honor,' said Crohoore, loosening his grasp, when he saw his antagonist secured by other hands; 'I give your noble honor thanks from my heart; I knew you'd be in time to stand my friend; and he lightly bounded to the front of the dock.'

'My lord,' continued Mr. B., addressing the judge, to whom he was personally known, 'accident has this morning put into my hands one of the real perpetrators of the murder with which the person at the bar stands charged, and of which he is convicted; but, my lord, he is as innocent as I am; the man he has himself just seized, and whom I have now arrested, is one of the true murderers; the other I have spoken of is secured also.'

A burst of astonishment and incredulity escaped all the hearers, as Mr. B. passed to the bench to converse with the judge; and, while one neighbor whispered his doubts or wonder to the other, the other might be seen smartly turning his head, compressing his brow, and throwing all his wisdom into his look, as in brief speech he asserted, what he knew in his heart to be untrue, that, all along, he had expected something of the kind; and every one evinced sympathetic sentiments of surprise, caution, or assent, by upraised hands and quick shakings of the head, while the rapid comment flew around in different directions. 'It bates bannacher,' said one, meaning to express their surprise or consternation:—'Tut—it can never be;—look at him,' observed others, who persisted in their skill in physiognomy: 'Faith, afther all,' whispered the most credulous or charitable—'he's as ugly as sin; but handsome is that handsome does; let us see the rest of it;' and then each made most of the place in which he happened to be stuck; and bodies were protruded, and necks and noddles poked forward, mouths opened wide, eyes and ears extended and started up, and a vast quantity of idle breath held in, to see, hear, and, if possible, understand, the wondrous sequel that, by their own calculation, was immediately to follow.

And all eyes were of course now bent upon the man who had been so unexpectedly taken into custody, and so suddenly accused of the dreadful crimes for which another was about to suffer. He stood, surrounded by the sheriff's power, in an ample outside coat, of which the standing collar reached above his ears, and was clasped with a hook-and-eye over the lower part of his features; a large black patch covered one of his eyes; and a black silk handkerchief, as if applied to an ailing part, extended along one side of his face; while his hat, of unusual dimensions in the leaf, and which he had hastily put on in the scuffle, slouched down so far as scarce to leave a trace of feature visible.

'Take off his outside coat from the prisoner,' said the judge, pausing in his conversation with Mr. B. His commands were obeyed; and the handles of two large pistols, exclusive of that discharged at Crohoore, and which he had dropped, were seen projecting from the bosom of his inner garb.

'Remove his hat, and the patch and handkerchief from his face,' the judge continued; this, too, was done; and the guilt-stricken countenance of the real murderer was that of our old acquaintance, Rhia Doran.

Here was fresh occasion for the widest wonder, as Doran's person had been previously well known by most of the lookers-on, of town and country; and, after a new buzz, the crowd once more prepared themselves to witness a grand explanation of the whole mysterious case. But their curiosity was doomed to disappointment.—As matter of form, the judge proceeded to pass sentence of death on Crohoore, who was then conveyed to the dungeons underneath; and Doran also experienced the tender care of the jailor.

CHAPTER XXI.

Into the domestic sitting apartment of the trust-worthy jailor we have next to introduce our reader; and, before we communicate the wished-for éclaircissement that there occurred, it seems desirable to describe the place itself.

The smoky walls were decorated—without any view to uniformity of position, for some of them hung upside down—with session and assizes notices, 'last dying words and declarations,' hue and cry proclamations, and rough draughts of jail calendars, interspersed with many ponderous keys, polished from constant use; not rusty, as they used to be in the old romances. A large cumbersome clock, without an hour hand, furnished one corner; its drowsy and laborious tick, tick, like the heavy breathings of an asth-

matic man, indicating the loads of dust and oil that clogged its lungs; and in the diagonal corner stood an immense old carved cupboard, inlaid and japanned and fretted and filigreed out of all meaning or purpose. The rest of the furniture consisted of a huge oak table, with falbig leaves two inches thick, and stout turned legs terminating in sprawling claws of tiger, lion, or any other beast the fancy might suggest; and four or five massive chairs of different shape and material, some oak, some ash, picked up, here and there, as chance threw them in the way;—the whole set commanded by an amazing two-armed superior, of roughest workmanship, which, from its weight, was never stirred out of the snug corner by the fire; the seat hollowed into two distinct concavities, to receive the two fat thighs of the fat Matthew.

In speaking of this chair, we have been induced to say it commanded, or seemed to command the others, from a similitude that has since occurred to us, when we beheld the scarleted and embroidered bravery of the city in which our tale finishes, what time public danger threatened the state, and the peaceful followers of trade assumed the martial costume, and left the quiet entrenchment of the counter to shoulder 'those vile guns.' They were drilled by a bluff, portly man, transcendent over the rest in size of paunch, and weight of flesh, who would try to bring the word of command to the dull capacity of the 'transmogrified' traders, by showing that, at the 'present arms,' the lock of the musket should just touch the waistband of the breeches. Such as thus commander by a peculiar association in our minds, was the vast two-armed chair; and, such as the soldier merchants, were its awkward squad, strewn about Matthew's apartment.

In Matthew's apartment, however, such as it is, are now assembled the persons whom, we flatter ourselves the reader is disposed to follow anywhere, that he may witness the investigation with which they are engaged.

They consist of Mr. B., aided by two other county magistrates; the hitherto formidable Crohoore; Pierce Shea—the rescued Pierce Shea; Rhia Doran, well guarded and hand-cuffed; his acquaintance, Tim Lyndop, also attended; Sheemua Croonawnee, whom Mr. B.'s servant failed to secure, but who, nevertheless, now came at call; Andy Awing's shadow, and the jailor himself—(being master of the house he could not with decency be excluded, although we have no immediate concern with the man); and a low female figure, clothed in a faded and tattered crimson cloak, the gathered hood hanging over her head and face, and covering whatever other drapery she wore.

'Now, Gentlemen,' began Mr. B., addressing his brother magistrates, and handing a paper, 'have the goodness first to read that deposition; it's Miss Lovett's; and of most importance.'

They did so. Mr. B. then stepped to the door, and returned, leading in the lady and her father.

'Is that your signature, Miss Lovett?' asked one of the Magistrates, showing the deposition.

'It is my signature,' answered the graceful and beautiful deponent.

'Have you read the contents of this affidavit, and are they true?'

'They are;' and Miss Lovett swore to their truth.

Mr. B. now led her towards Rhia Doran, and demanded, 'Is that the man?'

'That is the man;' said the young lady; and with her father left the room.

'By this evidence, then,' resumed Mr. B. 'the taller of the prisoners clearly stands accused of having led the gang of robbers, who only a few nights ago, plundered Mr. Lovett's house.'

'The plate I have shown you, gentlemen, and part of which by the crest and cyphers upon it is proved to have been carried off in the robbery, I found in the possession of the other prisoner; and he, therefore, also stands charged as an accomplice. Let us now trace their common connection with a more horrible outrage. Jailor remove out of hearing, into separate places, the prisoners and the medicant.'

Doran, Lyndop, and Sheemua, were accordingly led out, and the door closed.

'Crohoore,' Mr. B. continued, 'go on with the explanation we are all anxious to hear.'

'Will your honour give me my own way?'

'Yes, proceed.'

'Come forward, Dory Shea, the sister of Ned Shea, and the aunt of Pierce Shea, who is to the fore; come forward, and first tell to the face of these good gentlemen, and of your own nephew, who and what I am; and the speaker elevated his low figure to its utmost height, and a smile of pride and triumph gave a new and unpleasing expression to his generally repelling features, as the little stooped bag tottered from the background at his word.

'The name you got when the soggarth christened you,' she began, in a shrill, piercing voice,

the same that had grated on Alley's ear the night of her abduction.—'The name you got when the soggarth christened you was Anthony Dooling; and the murdered Tony Dooling was your father, and the murdered Canth Dooling was your own mother. I am old, and I am smful,' she continued, flinging the hood of the cloak from her head, and pushing back the matted white locks that fell about her wrinkled face, while a spark of more than age's intelligence lit her dark eye—but I was once young, and blooming, and happy; ay, Dora Shea was once the delight of many an eye, and the ache of many a heart, till she left the joy of her father's roof to wander the world wid a beggar; then sufferings and sin soon changed me, and when I prayed charity from my father, wid heavy strokes he drove me from his door, and didn't know his daughter.

'When this creature saw the light,' she continued, turning to Crohoore, 'I came a begging to his father's house; my own child died in my arms under Tony Dooling's roof; I took him from the cradle, and put the stiff could infant in his stead; the father thought his son died, and Canth Dooling thropt mothers tears over him. After some little time I gave over the shoo'ize life; my husband, Gorodie Donohoe, the boocloch, went to live among the hills, where fast by his cabin-door he had a way into the odd hiding-place in the rath, and people called him Sheemua-na-Sheemog; I didn't want Tony Dooling's boy to help me begging, any more, and I left him where his father found him; were the screamin' g voice of Dora Shea lifted.

'You have more to tell, a-roon, said Crohoore.

'Yes, I have; and I will tell it. It was many years afore the murder that young Anthony Dooling, now forwent ye, come wid his gun among the hills, and strrolling into my cabin found out the secret of Gorodie Donohoe's place in the green rath; and to keep him silent, for he was a hearty boy, not afear'd of anything, nor to be imposed upon like the others, I told him—God forgive me all my sins!—I told him he was my own son; and I reminded him of a mark upon his body, no one but myself or a mother ought to know; it was plain to me he never wished to see such a mother, but I found him good and dutiful, like a son, from that day out; and he never knew the truth of his real birth, till the night he brought his own sister Alley to my cabin, and then, wishing to save him from a sin I now know he never intended, I whispered in his ear, the minute they came together afore me, the words that gave him all the knowledge.'

'Ay,' said Crohoore, interrupting the narrator, 'I was then told I had a father I could be proud of, and a mother I could love, and I knew they lay murdered that very night. All my life I was a poor friendless creature, the thing to be feared at, and thropt upon, and abused by every body; and the words of my mouth grew rough and passionate, but meant nothing; my heart was only desolate, and dark, and scalded; it loved none, because none would let it love them; but it never had malice against a living thing;—and I was told I had a father, but he was gone, I was told I had a mother—she was gone, too—oh! I thought the heart in my body would burst that night! the tears ran down his cheeks, and sobs rent his bosom.'

'And now,' said he, when he gained some degree of composure, 'I must tell your honors all I know about that night.'

'On that night—that bloody night—I stole out, afther the family rested in their beds, as I often done afore, not to go wid the good people, as the charitable bodies said of me, but I went to set snares for rabbits, to give my old mother, as I then thought her. I had a lathern in my hand. Returning nigh to home, I heard a screech from the house; I said to myself it was odd; but I walked on. I found the house open; I found the murder done; I lifted the old man's corpse, and my hands were bloody; I didn't know I was locking at my dear father then. I went through the house, and found that Alley Dooling was gone;—Alley Dooling—the only one in the wide world that ever was poor Crohoore's friend, b-kase her nature was as sweet as herself was comely. I took the best horse; I stayed not for a saddle; I guessed the way the murderers went, by the screeching that still I heard; and I dashed across the country, to be on the turn of the road before them. The moon was bright; I tied my horse under the shade of a fence; and I stood on the fence; where a bush gave me a sure hiding-place. While I waited there an old man, Sheemua Croonawnee, the boocloch, came to me, by a cross-cut in the fields, on his way to Gorodie Donohoe's rath, and I beckoned to him, and made him stand to watch along wid me. We spoke never a word. The villainous son drove up: I had only a large stone in my hand; I knew Doran; I minded no other, because he had Alley on the horse before him; I aimed my blow well; he tumbled on the