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THE WRECK OF THE DILLONS. A TALE OF TIPPERARY—FOUNDED ON FACTS. (From the Dublin University Magazine.) CHAPTER I.

The scene was a brilliant one to those who witnessed it. The barn was wide, high and smoothly floored, so that no inequalities incommoded the footing of the dancers.

Neddy Nogher, the half-blind fiddler, with white eyebrows and eyelashes, and Jack Mulligan, the whole blind piper, sat near each other at the head of the ball-room, now and then exchanging low words of conversation, and uttering mysterious chucklings, while the young ladies of the party were ranged modestly all together, in a line against one of the walls, arrayed in all the splendor of new and gaudy cotton gowns, and waiting to be bowed out of their seats by the gallant youths who formed an opposition line of attraction.

There were besides, knots of elderly and married women, who had come to look on and gossip together; and pervading the atmosphere strongly was an odor of tobacco and whiskey—for Neddy and Jack liked pipes and po-tween, and whenever the dancers paused to rest themselves each musician regaled himself to his heart's content. They had both just finished a good smoke.

"Now, Neddy, give us the reel of Tullyugly," called out a dashing young fellow, with a profusion of dark hair and whiskers, and a bandit light in his black eye, as he started from his seat and stood up in the middle of the floor; "strike it up, man, for it's the finest tune you know!"

"Bedad, that's true for you, Peter Fogarty," said a dwarfish little woman, scarcely four feet high, who stood among a group of lookers-on; "but it's yourself that knows what's what." This last speaker stood in all the freedom of widowhood for the second time in her life, and, in spite of her large head and short figure, was still a favorite with all around.

"Catch Pety ever makin' a mistake about the purtiness of a tune or anythin' else," observed an elderly unmarried female, whose features and wits had become rather sharpened by time; and instinctively, as she spoke, her eye wandered to a spot where the fairest girl in the barn was sitting. Never did West-end ball-room contain a more beautiful creature. Slight and graceful, with features nobly formed, and cheeks slightly flushed, she sat leaning against the black wall of the barn, her red lips a little parted, so as to disclose teeth like pearls. There was much pride in the expression of her countenance—almost haughty; and her eye had a dreamy look, as if her thoughts were not centred upon anything present; her dress was neat, her hair arranged in many glossy braids, and the small hand that she raised occasionally to press upon her forehead, showed that she was not accustomed to hard work.

The eyes of Mrs. Fagan, the before-mentioned dwarfish widow, followed the direction of those of her companion, and something of grave distrust was marked upon her countenance as she contemplated the figure of the barn belle; and when she withdrew her eyes from her, she fixed them upon the athletic form of Peter Fogarty with a strange, uncertain expression. Neddy Nogher was tuning his fiddle, displaying during the process many a grotesque contortion of visage, common to such operations, and having tightened the strings and given a screw here and there, commenced the first note of Tullyugly, whereupon Peter Fogarty approached the spot where the beauty of the night was sitting, and with a deep, by no means ungraceful, bow before her, denoted that he solicited her hand for the coming dance. Perhaps one or two people in the barn might have observed that another young man started from his position against the wall, as soon as Neddy's first strains of the reel were poured forth, and with eye fixed upon the beautiful Nelly Dillon, had seemed intent upon claiming her for his partner; but on seeing that Peter Fogarty was too quick for him, he shrunk back with a crest-fallen air, and sat down again, as if dancing with any one but Nelly could afford him no pleasure.

"It isn't fair to ask me to dance so often, Pety," murmured Nelly, as she arose to become Fogarty's partner.

"Musha faith, an' I have as much right to you as any one here," replied the youth in an undertone, with a quick flash of his dark eye.

Very dejected and perturbed was the crest-fallen Dennis Ryan, as he sat against the barn wall, looking on the ground, while Neddy Nogher's arm waxed more vigorous each moment, filling the apartment with the strains of Tullyugly, which were kept time to by the clatter of a score of feet.

consumptive flush on her cheek, as, at the close of this dance, she caught up a sleepy child in her arms, and prepared to leave the barn. "See what it is to be married, Mrs. Fagan, with a half-dozen children;" and with a sigh of real regret, the fair young mother departed.

"Nancy, the crathur's sorry to go so early," said Mrs. Fagan, nodding her large head gravely, as a whiff of wind, consequent on the opening and closing of the door, blew through the barn. "They say the husband bates her, an' more shame for him. What do you say to that, Pety Fogarty? Has a man a right to bate his wife?"

"To be sure he has if she deserves it," replied Peter, shortly.

"Then may ye never get a wife, bad cess to ye?" shouted Mrs. Fagan, flinging a clod of turf at him. "Now, girls, what d'ye say to that?—Which o' yez 'id take him afther them words?"

"Oh, not one of them, to be sure!" exclaimed Pety, with a half-seemingly expression. "I wouldn't like to make the trial, Mrs. Fagan."

"Maybe ye think ye'd get any one o' them ye liked," retorted Mrs. Fagan.

"Ay, and them I didn't like, maybe, too," said Pety.

There was a shout raised at this; and as Fogarty's tall figure stood erect in the middle of the barn, muttered sentences of "bad luck to his impudence!" "Set him up, indeed!" "I'd like him to come for to ask me!" "Did ye ever hear the like?" ran through the female department, while among the men, some smiled, because the girls were vexed, and others looked as fierce and angry as jealousy could make them. Pety who seemed the spirit of the scene, now called for another tune, and, with a quickness peculiar to her, Mrs. Fagan saw that he was meditating another dance with Nelly Dillon, when she called out—

"Here, Pety, you'd better take the widow this time, for bedad I don't think any o' the girls 'il like to dance wid ye afther what has happened." and stepping forward, the lively Mrs. Fagan stuck her hands in her sides, and jiggled away, throwing her head from side to side, with movements more comical than graceful.

"Oh, with all the pleasure in life!" replied Fogarty, "I'm highly honored!" and, amid the laughter of many present, the quick-witted widow became his partner.

"Isn't Bet Fagan the pleasant woman?" whispered Nelly Dillon to her next neighbor, who fully assented to the observation. With all her seeming gaiety, Mrs. Fagan had some very deep thoughts too; and, as she stood before her chosen partner, she gave a slight encouraging glance to Dennis Ryan, as she observed him advancing to the fair Nelly, who, as well as her partner, looked confused and sheepish when she got up to dance. Everything pleasant must have an end in this world, and so had the dance that night in the barn. The candles grew shorter and shorter; one by one the elderly women dropped away; and such sentences as "Come, Kitty, how will you be up for the washin' at daylight to-morrow?" or "Oh, bedad, I'm fairly bet out now anyhow wid the sleep;" or "Ah thin, musha, I wish a body could dance for ever!" burst forth from the lips of sundry fair ones as the party was breaking up.

"Denny Ryan's to go home wid you, Nelly," said the Widow Fagan, as she strutted over to Nelly Dillon. "Yer father laid them commands upon me. 'Bet,' said he, 'if you see Denny at the dance, let him, an' no other, bring Nelly home.' So I said I would. I'd go wid you myself, only I'm going off wid Dan Phelan to the fair at Knockmayle; an' I'm not going home at all."

"And who was Dillon afraid 'id run away wid Nelly?" asked Peter Fogarty, with a dark sneer on his face, which the siren widow remarked quickly enough.

"Oh, bedad, there's many's the one 'id be glad to make off wid her," she replied, jokingly.

"He isn't afraid of Denny, though," observed Peter, drily.

"Denny's a neighbor's son, you know, and Pat has every dependence upon the family. Besides that, you know," lowering her voice, "Denny's so quiet himself, he's a most like a young woman."

Peter looked out darkly into the night. The barn door was wide open, and the stars glistened faintly in the sky. He put his hat on and walked out. He had scarcely gone many steps when a light figure came hurriedly towards him, and a hand gently touched his arm.

"Pety."

"Well, Nelly?"

"For the love of all that's good, don't go wid the boys to the still to-night. I heard that the gauger's men are huntin' close upon it, an' there will be murder, surely."

"What do I care?" muttered Fogarty, angrily. "I don't care a whistle for the still or gauger; and as for the murder—"

"Oh, keep out of murder, anyhow, Pety," hurriedly broke in Nelly. "Sure they say you

had a hand in killin' Mr. Cooke, of Crossmelik."

"Who says it?" interrupted Fogarty, fiercely, adding, in a defiant tone, "an' if I had a hand in killin' Cooke, didn't he deserve it? There's not a landlord in Tipperary who had as good a right to a shot."

"Keep out of mischief, anyhow," whispered Nelly; and with this last injunction she left him to join Dennis Ryan, who was waiting to escort her home. The night, though breezy, had a warmth very unusual at that season of the year. It was already November, and still the blackberries hung on the bramble bushes, and the hoarse croak of the rail could be heard far in the meadow. Dennis and Nelly took a short cut through the fields, and for some time their walk was pursued in silence. At length Dennis spoke—

"I'm thinkin', Nelly, you can't care for me as much as I care for you, or you wouldn't vex me in the way you do, dancing and cooching with that ill-conducted fellow, Pety Fogarty, foraint everybody."

"What can I do when he speaks to me?" asked Nelly, in a slightly offended tone. "Didn't I know him since I was the height o' that?" laying her hand very near the ground indeed; "and thin when he calls me to dance I can't refuse; it wouldn't be manners."

"But, sure, if you weren't civil to him he would be wid you so often," said Dennis. "The country is talkin' of you all round, sayin' yer makin' a fool o' me."

"Who cares what the country says?" said Nelly, whose eyes flashed in the starlight, "it says many's the thung that isn't true."

"But, Nelly, I've got eyes myself," murmured Ryan.

"Dinny!" exclaimed the girl, passionately, "if I thought you doubted me, even for a mint, I'd have you at worst! I'd never open my lips to bid you the time o' day again!" And as she uttered the words her proud face looked prouder than ever. "Were erer one of Pat Dillon's childer counted to tell lies; and haven't I told you over and over again, that I would never care for one as I care for you?"

"I know that, Nelly; but—"

"Not a sintince more!" interrupted Nelly.—"You've got my word, an' that's enough."

The white walls of farmer Dillon's house now rose up to view. It was a comfortable domicile, clean and tidy, and more commodious than the generality of such houses in Ireland. It had its garden and yard, its detached out-offices; and the goodly-sized field in the rear was still stocked with potatoes, waiting to be dug out for winter and spring use. There was hay and straw in abundance, already gathered and altogether an air of peace and plenty reigned round this rustic home. Pat Dillon was as honest a man as Tipperary could boast of; and Tipperary has its true hearts as well as any other county in Ireland. His sons were many, and all of unblemished reputations. Not one of them had ever cracked a skull, or fired at a landlord in his life; and no relative of the family, for the last thirty years, had been hung, which was saying a great deal for the Tipperary respectability or luck of the Dillons.

Pat had two daughters. The elder one a steady, dark-haired maiden, who eschewed dances and merry meetings; the other our fair friend, Nelly, who was the youngest of the family, and the pet and pride of the house. The farmer had for some time been aware that Dennis Ryan was attached to his pretty daughter; and as he belong to a family quite as respectable as his own was, moreover, a well-conducted, handsome young fellow, neither he nor his wife had any objection to a match taking place between the young people. Dennis, certainly, had nothing to fear from his sweetheart's parents; but there were times when a dread entered his breast that Nelly was only influenced by her family in receiving his attentions and tolerating his addresses. There were dark rumors afloat that she and Peter Fogarty had been lovers, even in childhood; and he knew well that, as a wild lad in his teens, Peter had hovered round Nelly, continually devoted to her every wish. If Nelly had wanted a bird's nest from the top of the highest tree, who had she always asked to climb for it? Pety. And did he ever refuse her?—Oh, no! he never did; nor would he if she had asked him to do much more for her. He gathered flowers from wild hills, and berries from the mountains for her, as offerings of his youthful love; and if he shot a snipe or woodcock he presented it always to her. His boyish adoration may have passed away; but if it had, it was only succeeded by the deep undying love of manhood. Ardent of temperament, Fogarty loved her almost to madness; and it can hardly cause surprise that he looked upon Dennis Ryan, who was openly allowed to pay his court to her, as a dangerous and hateful rival. There were dark reports about Pety in the neighborhood. He bore a doubtful character; and though, as yet, no regular accusation of crime had been brought against him, suspicion often rested upon him, and

it was whispered abroad that he was not a "safe person." Yet, somehow, the girls all admired him; and, perhaps, not a few were a little envious of the notice he bestowed upon Nelly Dillon. Among his own sex, however, he was looked upon as quite a black-sheep; and there was not a farmer in the neighborhood who would have liked a daughter or a sister to become his wife.

Nelly and Dennis parted at the house pretty good friends, and the latter returned to his own home a little relieved of some of his misgivings respecting his sweetheart's regard for Fogarty, though he still wished Nelly would more firmly resist the attentions of his rival. He feared the "country's talk;" and to hear Nelly's conduct commented upon did not please him.

Somewhere near his own house he encountered a solitary figure bearing a blunderbus; on nearer inspection it proved to be Fogarty, who, with a quick "fine night," passed him rapidly, Dennis stopped to look after him, and he thought Pety stopped, too, but he could not be sure; perhaps it was only a bush that he took to be his figure in the very dim starlight.

"What work can he be up to now?" thought Ryan, as he proceeded on his way.

CHAPTER II.

Did ye hear the news, girls?" asked Pat Dillon, as he came in to his breakfast next morning.

"No, father; what is it?" asked the elder daughter, Kitty.

"Why, it's said for certain that Tom Grogan, the gauger, was killed either last night or this morning. He was found with his head smashed to bits, down near the Devil's Pass, a few hours ago."

"The saints be good to us," ejaculated Kitty, as she placed a loaf on the table; but it was evident that the information caused her comparatively little emotion—not that she was particularly selfish or hard-hearted, but she was a Tipperary damsel, and accounts of midnight murders, or daylight assassinations, could not be expected to effect her nerves very powerfully. At the time we write of, and, mayhap, it is at present much the same, there was scarcely a resident gentleman in the country, that did not expect to have his life terminated at some time or other by a shot fired from behind a hedge, or whose death under such circumstances, would have caused more than a few moments' surprise to his neighbors.

To hear that a man was found murdered in this locale, occasioned about as much wonder as might have been excited in any other place by the information that a neighbor's cow or horse was discovered drowned in a pond.

"Grogan was a quiet man, then," said Kitty, as she went on getting breakfast.

"He was better, maybe, than then that'll come in his place," said Dillon, shaking his head; "but you see he did something to vex them fellows that keeps the still above Knockshea, and its likely they were bent on killin' him."

"I wonder had Pety Fogarty any hand in it?" said Kitty.

"I wouldn't put it past him," observed Dillon, gravely, "an' if there's anything I mislike, it's that sort of underhand murder. Why, a regular fight's another different thing—it's honest work; but waylayin' an' unsuspectin' man's cowardly and thief-like." And having uttered this sentiment the farmer proceeded to eat a hearty, homely meal.

During the repast Nelly had not spoken much; but a quick flush passed over her face whenever her father and sister mentioned the name of Fogarty; and by the tone in which both spoke of him, it was very evident they had a marked meaning in thus condemning his mode of life.

"If I had my will," said Dillon, "I wouldn't wish ever to see Pety inside the door."

"Nor I either," replied Kitty. "I don't know how it is, or what the cause of it may be, but he makes me thrimble a'most whin I see him."

"Then why does he ever come here?" asked her father. "It's not to see me, I'm sure; for him an' I isn't in any ways frin'ly this long time; an' now I'll be still all out wid him on account of this business of Grogan. I hear, Nelly, that you and Pety danced a dale together last night."

"We did, father," said Nelly, as boldly as she could, while her heart quivered nervously.

"He's as impudent as brass," added Kitty, emphatically, without looking at Nelly, who, nevertheless, felt pained by the tone of her sister's voice.

"Can't we have done wid him entirely and give him no more encouragement?" said Dillon. "I'm sure, if ye girls 'id give him the treatment he deserves, he'd soon stop coming to the house."

"Bedad, I look black enough at him," replied Kitty, with sincerity.

Nelly's face was pale, her lips compressed, and a dark light beamed from her downcast eye. That she was agitated, and yet endeavored to suppress all signs of emotion, was very evident.

"Fogarty's father was a decent man," said Dillon, after a pause, "an' him an' I were com-

rades many a year ago. I'm not the man to give up the son of an old frin', if he behaved respectable in himself; but I'm the last man in Tipperary to countenance an idle, scheming fella like Pety, and what's more, I wouldn't wish to have it reported that he an' me, or any one belongin' to me, was great wid other. Glory be to God, I'd rather see one o' my daughters in her coffin than married to the same Pety Fogarty."

"An' small blame to ye, father," rejoined Kitty, as she hastily mended the fire.

"Neither I nor yer mother 'd haul up our heads another hour if the like happened," continued Pat.

"It's not here Pety 'il ever thrive of lookin' for a wife, 'Co' thinkin'," said Kitty, with a short laugh, and a furtive look at her sister, whose head was now bent low over a stocking she was knitting.

"He may look if he likes, but he'll never get one out o' my house," observed Dillon, significantly, as he rose from the table and quitted the house.

When he was gone the sisters did not speak for some time. Nelly continued knitting, and Kitty went about putting up the breakfast things—wiping cups and saucers carefully, before ranging them on the white, well-scoured dresser; then she swept the floor, and taking her spinning-wheel from the corner where it usually passed the night, placed it in a more convenient position for use. There was soon a monotonous sound whizzing through the apartment, as Kitty sat before her wheel, drawing down a great mop of flax by slender threads. Almost in total silence the two girls thus sat pursuing their occupations, till the dinner hour arrived, bringing in their father and brothers; their mother had not yet returned from the fair at Knockmayle. After partaking of a very hasty meal, eaten without the least appetite, Nelly declared her intention of going to meet her mother, observing that she had promised to do so, to help to carry the parcels for her.

"Very well," replied her father, "you will not have to go far, for she said she'd be home afore the night falls. Her an' Bet Fagan was to come home with each other."

Nelly went to put on her cloak, whose hood was to serve as a covering for her pretty head; and as she was adjusting it, she heard her father observe to his sons—

"Boys, I'm thinkin' we ought to put a stop to all acquaintance with Pety Fogarty; it's high time it was done, for he's not fit company for decent people."

"Faith, he's not," said the elder son, "it's a disgrace to have any call to him; an' bedad, there's a nice report goin' that him and Nelly's making up a match."

"Who says it?" asked Dillon, sternly. "Who dare say it? Come here, Nelly, and tell us what reason people has to talk this way."

"They think, I suppose, they have a right to say what they like," answered Nelly.

"That's no answer," said Dillon sternly, as he took her arm. "D'ye hear, little girl—and mind it's yer father's spakin' to ye—if I knew you to give Fogarty the last encouragement in the world, I'd never look at you more. Promise now—there's a good colleen, and ye needn't look so frightened—that you won't spake to him ever again, more than to bid him the time o' day."

The girl was silent; her brothers looked grave, with eyes bent on the floor.

"Will you spake out, Nelly Dillon?" exclaimed the father, in a tone of authority.

Still the girl stood silently before him; her face pale as ashes, and an indignant light burning in her eye. Seldom before had Pat Dillon spoken so harshly to his pet child; but now he was trembling with passion, as he again seized her arm, exclaiming—

"Say that you'll not spake nor dance any more with Pety Fogarty, as you value your father's good opinion, and don't stand there like an obstinate mule!"

"No, father, I'll never promise that," replied Nelly, in a firm voice.

"And why not, young woman?"

"Because I'll never say the thing I don't intend to keep to; and if you an' all here think Pety Fogarty's more to me than all my own people, sure you're welcome to think it! and with an air of offended pride the damsel hastily left the house.

"She niver told me a lie yet," said Dillon, as soon as she was gone; "an' it's not the likes of her that 'id go for to bring disgrace on her people."

CHAPTER III.

The November evening grew swiftly dusky—a sultriness almost oppressive was in the atmosphere; scarcely a leaf was stirring, so still was the air. Gradually, however, as the knight advanced, a murmuring breeze ran through the tree-tops, by degrees swelling into a stiff gale; thick dark clouds hung over the distant mountains, and the muttering of far-off thunder broke upon the ear.