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THE HARE-HOUND AND THE WITCH.

BY JOHN BANIM.

(Continued.)

The morning of the hunt drew near, and still her lover was absent and silent. The match had become the talk of the whole country. With great difficulty and perseverance, Catherine succeeded in bringing her father's mind to contemplate her position, in something of a vein of seriousness. He could not, indeed, "for the life of him," surmise why she seemed so earnest and afflicted. But he did see and comprehend that she was really unhappy; and the best that he could think of to cheer her, he said and swore. He would break his neck with pleasure, and to a dead certainty, rather than not bring home the brush, and fling it into her lap. And when Kate's fears, at this solemn declaration, took, naturally, another turn, the honest squire was again at a loss to account for her tears, her clinging, tho' gentle embraces, and "her tantrums." He bawled right out, in utter mystification, at her entreaties that, come what might, he would not join the hunt; and, in fact, upon the appointed morning, away he rode towards the fox-cove, mounted on his crack hunter, Morgan Rattler, as full of buoyancy, and vigor, and solicitude, as the youngest of the competitors he expected to meet.

Great shouts rent the skies, as, one by one, the candidates for the gentle Catherine arrived at the appointed ground. Their horses, as well as themselves, were examined by curious and critical eyes, and heavy bets were laid upon the issue of the day's chase. The Squire, without communicating to any of his rivals his intention to hunt for his daughter himself, had contrived that his own fox-hounds should be in requisition; because he well knew that Morgan Rattler would do surpassing wonders at their tails.

The ruler of the hounds was the same who had held that situation under the former owner of Squire Hogan's estate. In his youth twenty years previously, we have noticed him as a daring fellow; we should have added, that he used to be as remarkable for his boisterous good spirits as for his reckless intrepidity. Now, however, at five-and-forty, mirth, and even outward dash of every kind, had disappeared from his character. His face was forbidding; his words were few; he never laughed, he never smiled; and, altogether, people regarded him as a dogged and disagreeable man. But enough of our huntsman for the present.

The day promised to be most favorable for the remarkable chase it was to witness.

"A southerly wind and cloudy sky
Proclaimed a hunting morn."

The ground was in prime order: the horses were full of vigor and spirit, after their long training; and except the huntsman's (and he comes in again sooner than we foresaw) every face beamed with joyous animation. In fact, upon this day, he was making himself particularly offensive; quarrelling unnecessarily with his hounds; sulkily refusing to take any advice or opinions (commands were out of the question) concerning his treatment of them; and giving short answers, and looking "as black as thunder."

"What is the matter with you, Daniel?" questioned the Squire.

"I have no fancy for the work to-day," answered the huntsman.

"Why so, man? what is all this about?"

"It was this day twenty years that my old master followed the witch down the rocks into the sea; and I was dreaming last night that he and I were hunting here again together, and that he drew me down the same lip afore him."

"Hut, tut, you fool! there is no witch to hunt now, you know."

"I know no such thing. You havn't heard that she is in her cave again?"

"Pho, ho, and 'tis impossible."

"It is not impossible: 'tis thru. Let little Tony take my place to-day; for I tell you twice over, I don't like the work."

"Both, Daniel. This day, of all the days, I can't and I won't spare you. Draw on the dogs; come, stir; see to your business."

With mutterings and growlings, Daniel proceeded to obey. He cast the dogs into the cover. For some time they drew through it in silence. Presently some yelpings were heard; then the leader of the pack sent forth his most melodious note; dogs and men took it up; the fox broke cover; and away after him stretched the eager hounds; and, close upon them, the no less eager huntsmen.

The Squire stood still for a moment, willing to let the foremost and most headlong candidates for his daughter's favor blow their horses a little before he would himself push forward. While thus musing, "Whom have we here?" he asked of the person nearest to him. His inquiry was aroused by a strange huntsman who had just then appeared on the ground, no one could tell whence:

"By the good day!" exclaimed the person addressed, "that's Jack Hogan who fell over the cliff, this day twenty years!"

"Nonsense, nonsense," said the Squire. The stranger turned round his head, as if he could have heard these words, though he was at a good distance.

"'Tis he, man! just as he looked the last day he hunted; his very dress! see how different from ours: and his black horse. I'd know horse and rider among a million. By all that's good, it is himself!"

The horses of the squire and of his neighbor, a man of fifty, who thus spoke, would brook no farther delay; and their riders were compelled to loosen their reins, and allow them to spring forward.

Daniel, the black-browed huntsman, was at this moment immediately next the hounds. Two or three of the rivals for fair Catherine's love rode within a little distance of him. The new comer loitered behind the last of the candidates: of course, the squire and his friend now pressed him hard. Suddenly his coal black horse, seemingly without an effort, and certainly independently of one from his master, cleared the ground between him and Daniel. The huntsman turned in his saddle, fixed an appalled look on his follower, uttered a wild cry, and desperately dashed his spurs into the sides of his steed. The stranger, still seemingly unexpected, as also appeared his horse, stuck so close to Daniel's crupper, that he could have put his hand upon it.

All swore that the fox outstripped the wind in swiftness. The hounds did their very best, and more than they had ever done before, to keep near to him. Each huntsman, including even our honest Squire, spared not whip and spur to rival them; but the huntsman first, and the stranger at his horse's tail, were the only persons who succeeded in the achievement.

Vain was the endeavor to come up with those two. And every now and then, black Daniel would glare behind him into the face of his pursuer, and with a new shout of horror re-urge his hunter to greater speed; and still, and still, although the stranger sat tranquilly in his saddle, Daniel could not gain a stirrup's length ahead of him. Over hill and valley, over ditch and hedge, over bog and stream, they swept, or plunged, or leaped, or scrambled, or swam, close upon the dogs, as if life were of no value; or as if they were carried, eddied forward, with supernatural speed, and in superhuman daring. Onward, onward they swept, scarce seeming to touch the earth, until at length only three other horsemen were able to keep them even in distant view. And, soon after, those three became two; and, again, but one followed remotely in their track; and this one was our excellent friend Squire Hogan.

The sea-cliffs came in view! and straight towards them did the mad chase now turn. In amazement, if not in terror, the Squire pulled up his horse on a rising ground, and stood still to note its farther progress. He saw the panting fox make for the dangerous place over the cliff's brow. For an instant he saw him on its very line. The next he disappeared towards the sea. At his brush came the hounds, and down they plunged also. The rival horsemen followed, and they, too, were in a second lost to view. A woman suddenly started up over the perilous pass, gazed below, and then sprang as if into the air. The mysterious fate of his predecessor fully occurred to our Squire; and he sensibly vowed to himself that, "By Cork! the faggot of a witch should never tempt him to leave the world by the same road." He also brought to mind his huntsman's words that morning; and a struggle arose between his reason and his superstitious propensities as to whether or not the man's dream had been verified.

While thus mentally engaged one of the baffled aspirants for Catherine's hand came up, himself and his horse soiled and jaded. Another and another followed, until almost all the members of that day's hunt surrounded Squire Hogan. He recited to them what he had witnessed. Greatly excited, some of them dismounted, and, under the care of an experienced guide, descended the cliff.

They found that the bewitched hounds, and their bewitched followers need not, as the Squire had supposed, have jumped direct from the land into the sea; inasmuch as they might have turned obliquely into a narrow, rocky ravine. Down this pass, however, it seemed impossible that horses of mortal mould could have found a footing. The explorers themselves were obliged to follow their guide very cautiously; as well to avoid tumbling downward, as to save their heads from the loose stones and fragments of rocks, which almost every step displaced and set in motion.

After having proceeded a little way, they caught, far below them, a glimpse of the dogs, whose cry came up to them, mingled with the roar and chafe of the waters of the sea. Shortly after they saw the huntsman, still closely pressed

by the stranger. The next moment, dogs, horses, and riders were lost to view, behind a curve of the tortuous and stony course of the ravine, all hurrying onward and downward, with whirlwind speed, as if to bury themselves in the waves of the ocean.

Our adventurers, persevering in their descent, suddenly turned a projecting rock, and came in view of a strip of strand running pronontory-like, into the sea; this they soon gained. Daniel, the husbandman, lay on his back upon it; his horse not to be seen. His dogs were squatted around him, each holding a fragment of bone between his teeth. The stranger sat still in his saddle, as if intently observing the prostrate man. The woman who had appeared to Squire Hogan on the cliff's brow stood on a rock amid the shallow breakers which rippled over the edges of the neck of strand.

As the explorers approached this group, the unknown horseman glanced towards them, took off his cap, waved it, and said, "Let no man claim Catherine Hogan's hand till I come to woo it. I have hunted for her; wooed her; and she is mine."

Those of Catherine's lovers who heard this speech were not chicken-hearted fellows. They resolved to ascertain who was the dictatorial speaker. Their friend, Squire Hogan, appeared in view, having nearly completed, at his cautious leisure, the descent to the sea's level after them; and they approached him, momentarily turning their backs on the object of their interest, for the purpose of consulting him, and enlisting him in a common plan of operations. After some discourse with the good Squire, and when he and they would have confronted the unknown horseman, no human form but that of the sulky Daniel was visible on the strand; and there he lay, stretched at his length, and still apparently insensible.

To him their attention became directed.— They found him covered with blood, and seemingly a corpse. His dogs continued to crouch around him, holding bones between their grinning teeth; and they snarled fiercely when the new comers approached them.

"By the blessed light!" exclaimed the Squire, "this is part of a man's skull that Ranger has his teeth through!"

"It is," answered Harry Walsh; "and not one of the dogs but holds a human bone between his jaws."

The prostrate huntsman opened his eyes and gazed fearfully around him.

"What has happened to you, Daniel?" questioned the Squire.

Daniel's head turned in the direction of the voice, and he seemed to recognize the speaker.

"Is he gone?" he asked, faintly.

"Is who gone? for whom do you inquire?"

"The master's spirit—the spirit of the murdered man—the man that I murdered and buried in this sand twenty years ago!"

Amid exclamations of surprise and horror from all who heard him, the huntsman gained, for a moment, more perfect power of observation. He looked from one to another of the group around him; then most ghastly at the dogs; and then closing his eyes and shuddering, continued to speak in snatches.

"Ay, and it was a cruel murder. I have never slept a night's sleep since I did it. And every dog of the pack brought me one of his bones to-day. I will hide it no longer. I will own it to the world, and suffer for it. His spirit drove me before him to the spot where I had buried his broken body after I tumbled him over the cliff—yes, buried it as deep as I could dig. Twenty years passed away, and he came to chase me to his unblest grave; and at the sight of it my horse tossed me out of my saddle, and my own accursed bones are broken this day, and so I have half my punishment. Did I see the witch near me, here, a while ago? I did; and 'the waters of the sea gave her up, alive, to be a witness against me. For, when I was burying him this day twenty years, I spied her watching me; and I ran after her, and seized her, and pitched her far into the waves; but now she is come to hang me. Let her. I will tell all—all—of my own accord; I will, and swing high for the deed."

He was conveyed to the Squire's house: and in his presence, and that of other magistrates, made a more ample confession. He had been tempted to commit the murder under the following circumstances.

The mother of his old master received under her protection a friendless and penniless orphan girl of low birth. The young huntsman loved her to distraction; and his ardors were seemingly returned, until the Squire, then a minor, became his successful rival, seducing, under a promise of marriage at his mother's death, his fickle mistress. Rage, hatred, loathing, took possession of Daniel's heart; he could have beaten out the brains of his young master with the loaded end of his hunting whip; and his amiable feelings were not added to, when, upon a day that he was expostulating,

alone, with the estranged object of his affections, the Squire suddenly rushed upon him, snatched that identical whip from his hands, and energetically laid it across his own shoulders.

The Squire's mother died. The Squire cast off his mistress, and married a wealthy wife.— It was now the turn of the depraved, bad-hearted, and forsaken girl, to look for her revenge. Upon certain conditions, she offered herself, "soul and body," and without the trouble of a marriage, to her old lover. Daniel's eager passion for her, and his deep detestation of her undoer, had scarce abated. He felt sorely tempted, but hesitated. The girl threw herself in his way from time to time; refused him; and in almost a year subsequent to the first attempt to make him a murderer, he was one, nay, a double one; for, a few days after he had dragged his master off his horse, and hurled him down the cliff, he placed in his tempter's arms, on the understanding that she was to destroy it, the only child of his victim. But, even in the disappointment of his feverish dream of passion, he had a foretaste of the punishment due to his crime. From the moment he committed to her the helpless infant she so much detested, he had never seen the authoress of his ruin; and his belief was, that, after having murdered "the child of days," she had put an end to her own existence.

A few hours following his confession the huntsman died.

(To be concluded in our next.)

REV. DR. CAHILL.

THE BISHOP OF EXETER ON THE DEPLORABLE STATE OF PROTESTANTISM IN ENGLAND.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

If an Irish Catholic writer, or even an English Protestant historian, published the facts contained in the speech of the Bishop of Exeter, delivered in the House of Lords on Friday night, the 23rd of April, the statements made from such a quarter would be disbelieved as fabulous or ridiculed as rancorous slander. But when the statistical account proceeds from the unwilling lips of a spiritual lord in the Senate House, the entire assembly seemed perfectly aware of the facts; they appeared like persons who only wanted official confirmation of the statements; and hence, without discussion or opposition, they unanimously agree to an immediate inquiry into the astounding paganism or infidelity of London and the English manufacturing towns. The history of all modern Europe, taken in the aggregate of its cities, presents no such amount of ignorance, vice and irreligion as can be seen and felt in the single city of London; and lest partisan criticism might dispute the precise value of the Bishop's words, he has put forth his observations from official documents; and he has presented them to the woollack and to the universal public, in the undeniable figures of rigid arithmetic. I shall now quote some passages, from what may be called the Bishop's report of the decline of English Protestantism, viz:—

"The motion he was now making consisted of two branches—one relating to the metropolis, and the other to the populous districts of the mining and commercial parts of the country. The metropolis was an agglomeration of men such as had hardly ever been known before. We had a metropolis containing nearly 3,000,000 persons; and the increase went on at the rate of 60,000 a year! In twenty-five parishes of the metropolis, there was only one clergyman to every 9,000 souls. In six of the most populous districts of London there was a population of 800,000, for whom there were provided only 192,000 sittings, leaving thereby no room in these districts for 614,000 persons to attend worship. In nineteen of the most destitute districts the population was 1,423,000 while the sittings there only amount to 208,865, thereby leaving no room for 1,214,135 persons to attend at church! The poor, therefore, not only had no churches to attend, but they were elbowed out of the places where they could find room, and to which they had as good a right as their lordships had to a seat in that house. The Secretary of the London Diocesan Church Building Society stated that the population of twenty-five parishes was 460,125, while the sittings were only 37,170, that is, something less than one-twelfth of the population, leaving no room for 422,955 persons! The entire population of the borough was 343,784; and there was only accommodation for 57,500, that is 16 2-3 per cent! He could prove that the vast population of Manchester was as spiritually destitute as London; while in Liverpool it was greater, the room in churches there being only for eight persons in every hundred! The actual attendance of the whole population, when all the churches were fairly filled, was about 10 per cent. ten persons in every hundred. The churches were, therefore, not frequented by the laboring classes; until recently they had not in some churches a single sitting or kneeling place. There were thousands on thousands of persons in London, Liverpool, and the other towns who had never been in a church, and who had never been baptized!"

The Times newspaper, in quoting the Bishop on this subject on Monday, the 26th April, concludes as follows, viz:—

"The facts disclosed by the Bishop amount to destitution literally; to that state of spiritual inanition which in physical matters would be termed downright famine. Thousands upon thousands of persons never go to church, have never been baptized, and

have no better title to the name of Christians than the natives of New Guinea."

The Irish Catholics have been long made acquainted with this awful state of religion in England; our journals, our pamphlets, our magazines, our general literature have continually kept before the eye of Ireland this picture of English gospel ignorance; but never, in my remembrance, has the astounding statement come from a Protestant Bishop; a Bishop, too, having a seat among the spiritual Peers in the Senate House. And so decided has been his report, and so stunning has been the revelation, that the full House of Lords endorsed without a moment's hesitation his lordship's statements, and unanimously agreed to grant an inquiry into this naked Paganism of the great metropolis of Protestantism. What a fact this for France, where London Bible Societies spend tens of thousands of pounds sterling to teach the gospel to the French Capital!—How generous to carry devotion to the stranger, who has no need of this English Evangelism, while their own fellow-citizens are not baptized at home! What a model city to bring cargoes of godliness to foreign peoples, while their brother Reformers are dying of a "spiritual famine" at home! With what prestige must they enter a foreign city to teach Christianity, while they have left behind them at home ninety persons out of every hundred in a state of avowed paganism! What splendid Christians must they not make of the Parisians, the Austrians and the Spaniards, when it is understood that after 300 years of their teaching their own nation never go to church, and have never heard the name of the Saviour! What a pity the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and the King of Naples do not encourage the zeal of these London missionaries; what a shame on the character of Popery in Italy not to admit these English Apostles to teach in the National Schools there, seeing the blessed results of their ministry in their London congregations, described by the Times as more savage in point of religion than the natives of New Guinea! This holy reformed system, so successful in London and Liverpool, must recommend itself with a trumpet tongue, even to the Pope, when he learns from a Protestant Bishop that the English Church, with an annual income of eight and a half millions sterling, has no room for the poor either to stand or kneel on Sundays!—that tens of thousands of persons have never heard the name of Christ, never been baptized, never been in a Church! Europe is already aware, without the Bishop's testimony, that London has been a Babylon of infidelity and all crime; that the English foreign Bibles are spies in disguise, hired hypocrites; their missionary profession a mask to excite rebellion, their whole character a scheme of base perfidy, their tracts and their Bibles an ill concealed feint to direct public attention from the accumulated vice and the unnatural crimes which have long made the religion of England into a proverb of licentious apostasy and cruel intolerance.

This Protestant Church Establishment will, in all probability, in coming time, be the cause of her decline and total overthrow. The Bishops, the lay impropiators of the tithes, the holders of the benefices, plundered from the old Catholic Church, are the unholy association who have spread infidelity at home, who have excited the just indignation abroad, and who, if not checked in time, will weaken our domestic institutions and, perhaps, ultimately menace the very throne itself. This Biblical confederacy have annually collected the enormous sum of about five millions sterling, (see their reports,) on the pretence of spreading the "Reformation" at home and abroad. But, their real, yet inconsiderate object, has been to uproot Catholicity; to diminish or annihilate the enemies of their ill-gotten possessions; and thus to secure the permanent tenure of their public fraud. In carrying out these views, however, they have overstepped their malicious prudence: they have neglected their own church at home: Protestantism has consequently disappeared from all the large communities; and its place is now occupied by the creed of the Methodists, the Independents, the Baptists, and by the Sectarian classes, so well known in the reign of Charles the First, and in the usurpation of Cromwell. I am not the sole author of any disastrous anticipations on this point; they have been written long ago, by a more eloquent, and a more learned, and a wiser pen than mine. But, the throne has need to beware how it begins to shift its position: let the monarchy take care how it leans for protection and stability on societies, which, in Germany, and at home, have set a crimsoned letter to kingly power.— If this state of things be not checked in time, the past historian, not my pen, prophetically announces, that the crown of Great Britain may yet, in times of need, as heretofore, seek; and will assuredly obtain the loyal support of the Catholics of these countries against the infidel, the Republican regicides, which her own church establishment has engendered and called into life by a system of licentious rapacity called religion, unknown in either ancient or modern times.