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CROHOORE OF THE BILL-HOOK.

BY JOHN BANIM.

CHAPTER XIX.

The hour for Pierce Shea's execution on the gallows, or rather for his progress to it, sounded from the town-clock of Kilkenny.

He came forward, clad in a jacket of white linen, leather small-clothes, fitting tight to his limbs, white stockings, and shoes with buckles. His head was bare; and his long, fair locks, decently combed back, hung in curls around his face and shoulders.

The sheriff, with his white wand, attended by the still gruff jailor, immediately preceded him; and a car, holding Pierce's coffin and his executioner, the last agent of the law disguised from popular recognition by a large outside coat, a slouched hat, and a black mask—closely following.

As they were closely moved along the streets of the city, the shops, to prevent accident from the crushing crowd, were closed and this arrangement gave an appearance of mute sympathy with the mournful exhibition.

We were young and giddy on that memorable day, and pushed with childish eagerness to behold so novel a sight; yet we remember to this hour the impression made on our tender minds by the face and manner of the unfortunate man.

Her lover had but one sentiment for Alley, as he now stood encircled by her arms; he looked at her with love alone; all her late conduct was forgotten. He could not return her embrace, because his arms were pinioned with the felon cord; but his head sunk on her shoulder, and he wept the only tears that had that day escaped him.

The procession gained the last turning of the last suburb street, it had to traverse. The high gallows-tree was straight before the culprit. At first sight of it he stepped back a little, and pressed tight the arm of his priest.

At this moment some stir and noise in the crowd behind diverted general attention from the chief object. The bustle increased; the crowd

fell back; a carriage drove furiously up in a cross direction; and a voice was heard crying out, in accents hoarse with earnestness and emotion—'Mr. Sheriff! Mr. Sheriff!'

The sheriff instantly hastened to where the carriage had drawn up, and was seen to listen to some rapid instructions addressed to him by a person within. In less than a minute the conference was over; the sheriff bowed profoundly at the carriage window, and the carriage again drove away towards the main streets of the town; followed by a post-chaise, from which Tom Lyndop, the butcher, nodded smilingly to his many acquaintances among the crowd, to their utter astonishment, and, for the sake of human nature we blush to record, merriment too; for, even amid the horrors of such a scene, our fellow-creatures can be merry.

The greater part of the multitude were, however, too remote to be influenced by the shameful occurrence; and, as the sheriff returned, they only whispered, and conjectured, and still hoped something or other. But he gravely took his place at the back of the culprit, and gravely motioned to proceed to the fatal spot: all again moved on, more melancholy than ever; Pierce seeming to have lost power or will to follow up anything distinct from his situation, or which was not at once made clear to him; and the crowd concluding that the communication with the chief officer could have had no concern with him.

The culprit and his priest stood under the gallows. Pierce saw the guard of horse and foot close darkly and sternly around him; he felt that they came, like the shadow of death, between him and existence. Still he stood bravely as a Christian man looking from this world into the glory of the next, and therefore able to think more of what he hoped to gain, than what he was about to lose. The clergyman, a young man like himself, held his hands, and, with tears of mingled grief and zeal running down his cheeks, continued to speak the last grand words of comfort and promise. Then he kissed the sufferer's lips, and intimated to the sheriff that his penitent was ready for his fate.

Her cap had been rent from her head in the wild struggle; her mantle, too, she had left in the hands of the resisting guards; her shining auburn hair fell luxuriantly down, as if anxious to supply its absence; and, alas! from her fair temples a ghastly stream of blood—the effect of a blow given her by one of the soldiers, more cruel than the rest, ran over her ashy cheek and beautiful neck.

And she, too, acted and spoke as if her love for him had never been excelled by woman's love for man, and as if she never had let it cool or slumber in her bosom. She was, indeed, distracted with the agony of that hour, and her words were those of a lunatic. Addressing the guards around, she told them they could not, dare not, part her from her lover; she would not part him from her arms; he was her own Pierce, and she was his own poor Alley Dooling; and then, turning and smiling faintly in his face, she asked him to confirm what she had said, and to declare he would come home with her, and not stay near them.

Pierce pronounced her name, and she started and looked at him, and watched his lips, as if to listen to her own sentence of life and death. One advanced to part them; her quick eye caught the person's motion, and, again screaming wildly, she clasped him closer, and hid her face in his bosom. But her efforts were vain; for at a signal from the sheriff, the soldier, withdrew to his ranks.

'God bless you, sir,' said Pierce, addressing the humane officer: 'I ask but a moment's indulgence; our young hearts loved each other;—and, although this is the last parting, it shall not be a long one; I did not wish it; but, now that

it is come upon me, I thank you for your kind permission to go through it as I can. Alley, dear Alley,' he continued, 'I cannot take you in my arms; the cords will not let me;—clasp close, then;—kiss me;—and let me die like a Christian.

He bent his head; their cheeks only touched; for Alley could attend but to one word of his address; and that word—'die!—die!—she repeated in shrieks that rose to the heavens. All the while the sheriff had appeared as if watching some sound, or the approach of some one from a distance, more attentively than the scene of which he might have been so close a witness;—and at this moment, as Alley's shrieks were interrupted by a very faint and distant shout, he was seen to strike his rod smartly against the ground, and clasp his hands joyfully. All heads instantly turned in the direction from whence the shout came, and Pierce and his mistress stood silent and motionless;—in the action of statuary only.

The cry was repeated and repeated, nearer and nearer—indeed it seemed one unbroken roar of human voices, rather than intermittent shouts. The crowd around started into livelier action, and broke their own dead silence; first whispering quickly; then muttering; then talking loudly, in question or assent; until, at last, as the foremost of the running throng came near enough to convey their ecstatic words to the outskirts of the those who surrounded the gallows, the people present burst into one mightily answering cheer, and—'a reprieve!—a reprieve!'—they exclaimed to a man, jumping here and there as they spoke, and throwing up their hats and caps; yet only showing, in the whole of their mad joy at the saving of one fellow-creature's life, how dear, beyond words or utterance, is the love of life in the general human bosom.

The tumult rose higher, as the noise of carriage wheels was again heard approaching the gallows-green, and as all caught the sight of a white bandkerchief waving high in the air at the top of a long rod.

'Make way—make way!'—cried the sheriff—'soldiers, fall back; and make way!'

'Make way!—way, way!'—echoed every voice, the soldiers themselves sharing the gladness and zeal of the multitude; joining their shouts; but further manifesting an active spirit, somewhat to the annoyance of their civil brethren, as with the butts of their muskets, and the flat of their swords, they carried into effect the order they had received, more promptly than the motions of a distracted and unreflecting crowd could, with all the eagerness and rapture, anticipate.

At last a clear way was made to the sheriff, and in drove the carriage that had before been seen; and Pat, seated on the box with his rod and white flag, and Mr. B. appeared half way out at the windows. It stopped; Pat was down in a twinkling, to pull the door open; Mr. B. jumped out, and handed a paper to the sheriff; and that officer instantly confirmed, by officially repeating it, the magical word the crowd had a thousand times before shouted; and with which they once more rent the air, in a final acclaim, that, reinforced by the presence of the second throng, was tremendous.

In the next instant, Mr. B. was by the side of Pierce Shea, assisting in tearing away the cord that pinioned him, shaking his hands heartily and triumphantly, and speaking rapidly to ears that heeded him not. We have not attempted to describe the workings of Shea's heart during the last few moments; nor shall we now attempt it. For all our previous details we have had the visible facts before us; but here should be an effort of imagination which cannot pretend to reach the extraordinary mysteries of the human soul in such a conflict of feeling. We content ourselves, therefore, with relating the appearance only of Pierce Shea, at this great moment. He stood without word or gesture; he stared beseechingly around him; he seemed incredulous to the announcement of preserved life, and a long vista of happy days to come. Death and he had already made acquaintance; they had shaken hands on the very limit of the unknown world, as the youth's back was turned on the reality of this, his eyes withdrawn from its sunshine, and his ears shut against its happy sounds; hope had quite, quite fled his heart; the last, last hope of life; he had even ceased to think he lived! and now to be told it was a dream! to be told that death had yielded up his victim! to be told of life again, and of days and years of blessed life! to feel the second birth of hope within him! he looked, we say, as if he durst not believe it.

Mr. B. soon saw the inutility of continuing to give a series of information to his young friend, and, for the present, attended only to his situation. He gently released Alley from his hands, whom, as she fainted under the first announcement of the joyous news, Pierce had mechanically caught and held from falling. Then, causing wine to be brought to the spot, Mr. B.

gave some to the rescued man; made him seat himself; and, by degrees, restored the tone of his thoughts and sensations, until poor Pierce could, at length, gratefully and rapturously return the salutations of Mr. B., and kneel down in thanks to heaven and to him.

And now, too, he was able to understand the subjects his zealous friends and patron had before vainly endeavored to explain. Mr. B. stated that, owing to the suddenness of the account he had received of Pierce's misfortune, the late hour of night at which it had reached him, and the necessity of instantaneous departure from Dublin to Kilkenny, as scarcely a minute could be spared, he had preferred a first application to the judge by whom Shea had been tried, and who was on the spot, rather than run the hazard of remaining an hour away in negotiation with vice-regal government. The letter he had received in Dublin, together with his personal knowledge of Pierce, enabled him at once to give the judge such information of his character, of the circumstances by which he had been seduced into whiteboycism, and of his guiltless conduct during the outrage on the proctor, as at once procured the respite of which Mr. B. was the bearer, and would finally insure a free pardon from the Lord Lieutenant; so that Pierce had now but to endure a few days of confinement, rendered happy by the certainty of coming enfranchisement. Mr. B. added, that his own mind had suffered exceedingly on the road to Kilkenny, particularly when, after starting from the stage where we last left him, his carriage wheel again failed, and much precious time was spent in repairing it. In fact, as we have seen, he had nearly come too late; and his first interview with the sheriff was before his application to the judge, to create time, by praying of that officer, to whom he was well known, a short pause, till he could return from the county courthouse, whither he hastened, to appeal to the sitting judge on the very bench of justice.

After this explanation, Mr. B. again shook hands with Pierce, and got into his carriage;—acquainting him that he had pressing business of another nature to transact at the instant, with Mr. and Miss Lovett; which allusion partly bore reference to the detection of the stolen plate, and partly to the general statements the young lady had made in her letter of Shea's whiteboy connection.

The carriage drove off amid renewed cheers. The guards once more closed round Pierce, to re-convey him to his temporary imprisonment; but, ere he left the spot he observed an old hag make way through the crowd, and attended on Alley, who was just recovering from her swoon in the arms of some female, to whom Mr. B. in his haste had been obliged to consign her.—She had never before seen this person; but she looked mean and squalid; and, as he wondered how such a creature could presume to exercise over his mistress the command and officiousness he now saw her evince, remembrance, bitter remembrance awoke; Alley's behaviour during their interview in the glen of Ballyfole came to his mind; and the sad thought, that she was unworthy of his love, checked the exultation of his vivified spirits, and cast a shade even over the daylight to which he had just been so miraculously restored. As he lost sight of the place they occupied, Alley withdrew through the crowd, clinging to the old woman.

But, at this moment, a new occurrence attracted him. An amazing yell, superior to the din of all the other voices that still kept cheering and huzzinga, came up the street, along which the soldiers conducted their prisoner; a hat was cast into the air, three times higher than any other hat, and a bare-headed fellow appeared running at the top of his speed against them, jumping and capering, and smiting the stones with his tremendous alpeen, and testifying all that beheld him. He pranced and bellowed like an escaped bedlamite; he pushed aside, or shouldered, or knocked himself against every one he met; and the women of the suburb houses, running to the doors as he passed, raised their hands and eyes, and hastily pulled in their children. Some loving boys, who had at first looked at him in amazement and misgiving, ventured to join their 'shiloo' to his and then set scampering at his heels; they were soon strengthened by others; and all proceeded toward the soldiers, the mad fellow leading the way, and the delighted urchins mimicking him, as far as in them lay, his cries and gestures.

They gained the slow-moving body of soldiers, and Pierce recognised his foster-brother. He plunged on Pierce like a tiger; squeezed him desperately in his gigantic arms; let him go;—danced round him, yelled again, and again smote the paving stones at every bound; then, suddenly darting through the soldiers, raised his voice louder than ever; and galloped off, in a country direction; no one knew whither, why, or wherefore.

But Andy knew very well. He raced, followed by his own admiring crowd, to the gal-

lows-green; and a rush at the wooden paraphernalia there erected: in two jostles it was prostrate; and he leaped and danced on it, while there was a fresh shout for him and his achievement. An old man, leaning on a staff, while he swayed from side to side, not able to support himself, even by its assistance, stood near; feelings not yet vented had left his face a ghastly blank; he did not weep nor smile; with one side-wind of his alpeen Andy Awling struck the staff many yards away and old Ned Shea, deprived of his prop, fell to the earth. There was a horse and car near the old man, just about to be led off; to this Andy next directed his attention. As he too rapidly approached, an individual, in a black mask, protected by a single soldier, and one who had attentively watched the hero's last movements, jumped from the car, and very wisely ran towards the main body of the guards. Andy sent an expressive shout after him, and, instantly bounding on the vehicle, tore from it a coffin, which he flung to the ground, jumped upon, again and again, and soon reduced to splinters.

The work of destruction done, he instantly retraced his steps, still at the utmost speed, thro' the town, until he again came up, on their solemn march, with the guards that surrounded his foster-brother; and here, while he still pounded the paving-stones and mud around them, splashing the well-whitened small cloths of the tolerant soldiers, who, by their passiveness, evinced as much good nature as could be expected from soldiers; while he flourished the primitive weapon over their heads, or gaily shouldered it, and walked, an imitative animal, by their side; and, while he bent down his very back to 'screech,' or shout upward and downward, like the rod of a steam-engine, Andy occasionally addressed them—

'Whoo!—chorra-na-chree war the soldiers!—whoo! to the duoul wid the skibbeeah! long life to the sassenachs, and glory for ever.'

And when they had delivered their charge to the thereby discontented jailor—

'Stay a bit, my darlings!—ma-horp-an-duoul—we must have a drop together, afore we part—the best in the town, and your skin full iv id! Bad end to me, your honor,' addressing the officer, whom he just then perceived, and whose face, he thought, conveyed a doubt as to the intended treat—'Bad end to me, your honor, but myself and myself must have as mooch and as good as ever ye can suck in;—lashins and lavins, whoo!'

It was necessary to put him aside at the point of the bayonet, before they could get rid of his importunity. But Paddy Loughnan and two or three of his cast were lookers on; and determining to take advantage of Andy's generous mood, he proposed that his companions and himself should accept what the cheerful red-coats refused. In his moment of exuberant rejoicing, Andy Awling made no prejudiced calculations, but pulled them all into the next public-house; and the same evening saw the three lubbers of the law swearing assault and battery against their entertainer and his alpeen; for he no sooner got tipsy enough to recollect the kind of persons with whom he was associated, than his natural antipathy to all of their tribe returned full upon him, and he took the first favorable opportunity of breaking their pates. Even had the soldiers accepted his invitation, he would most probably have treated them just in the same way; for if from his cradle, a balliff of any kind was with him synonymous to a thing made and ordained to be pounded whenever one could meet with it, Andy entertained a like jealousy of red-coats, or sassenach soldiers; disliking the color of the king's livery as heartily as the great big turkey-cock at Ned Shea's barn-door; and, as to a plausible reason or motive for such swelling hostility, no doubt the one could assign it as well and as distinctly as the other:

(To be continued.)

PIUS IX. DEFENDED BY A MEMBER OF THE JEWISH CONSISTORY OF PARIS.

(From the Armonia.)

Signor Cohen, in a letter addressed to the chief editor of La France, although a Jew, after the example of Catholics, sets forth his views on the Roman Question, and explains the reasons for which he coincides with the opinions of that journal, to which he is a contributor. The sanctity of the Roman question, proved by a Jew, guided only by sound judgment, is the most solemn and most categorical condemnation of the revolutionists.

We (Armonia) take the following extracts from the aforesaid letter, which is contained in La France, of the 30th of September:—

'I shall not repeat the irrefragable arguments with which (La France) demonstrated that the unity of Italy is a Mazzinian idea, heated up and matured against France, by the rival jealousy of England. I shall not record the danger into which our country and the peace of Europe would be plunged by the definite constitution at our doors of a political and maritime power of the first order, which, notwithstanding the services we have rendered it might not delay for a single day to astonish the world with the greatest of its ingratitude. I will merely confine myself to asserting that the interest of France occupies the chief thread of the fore-