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THE MURDERED PEDLER.

A TALE OF THE SOUTH OF IRELAND.

(Concluded.)

All was now still in the house, but Kathleen could not sleep. She was feverish and restless; her limbs ached, her head throbbled and burned, undefinable fears beset her fancy; and whenever she tried to compose herself to slumber, the faces of the two men she had left below flitted and glared before her eyes. A sense of heat and suffocation, accompanied by a parching thirst, came over her, caused, perhaps, by the unusual closeness of the room. This feeling of oppression increased till the very walls and rafters seemed to approach nearer and close upon her all around. Unable any longer to endure this intolerable smothering sensation, she was just about to rise and open the door or window, when she heard the whispering of voices. She lay still and listened. The latch was raised cautiously, the door opened, and the two Hogans entered; they trod so softly that, though she saw them move before her, she heard no footfall. They approached the bed of Halloran, and presently she heard a dull heavy blow, and then sounds—appalling, sickening sounds—as of subdued struggles and smothered agony, which convinced her that they were murdering the unfortunate pedler.

Kathleen listened, almost congealed with horror, but she did not swoon: her turn, she thought, must come next, though in the same instant she felt instinctively that her only chance of preservation was to counterfeit profound sleep.—The murderers, having done their work on the poor pedler, approached her bed, and threw the gleam of their lantern full on her face; she lay quite still, breathing calmly and regularly. They brought the light to her eyelids, but they did not wink or move; there was a pause, a terrible pause, and then a whispering: and presently Kathleen thought she could distinguish a third voice, as of exhortation, but all in so very low a tone that, though the voices were close to her she could not hear a word that was uttered.—After some moments, which appeared an age of agonizing suspense, the wretches withdrew, and Kathleen was left alone, and in darkness. Then, indeed, she felt as one ready to die; to use her own affecting language, "the heart within me," she said, "melted away like water, but I was resolute not to swoon, and I did not. I knew that if I would preserve my life, I must keep the sense in me, and I did."

Now and then she fancied she heard the murdered man move, and creep about in his bed, and this horrible conceit almost maddened her with terror; but she set herself to listen fixedly, and convinced her reason that all was still—that all was over.

She then turned her thoughts to the possibility of escape. The window first suggested itself: the faint moonlight was just struggling through its dirty and cobwebbed panes. It was very small, and Kathleen reflected, that besides the difficulty, and, perhaps, impossibility of getting through, it must be some height from the ground: neither could she tell on which side of the house it was situated, nor in what direction to turn, supposing she reached the ground; and, above all, she was aware that the slightest noise must cause her instant destruction. She thus resolved upon remaining quiet.

It was fortunate that Kathleen came to this determination, for without the slightest previous sound the door again opened, and in the faint light to which her eyes were now accustomed, she saw the head of the old woman bent forward in a listening attitude; in a few minutes the door closed, and then followed a whispering outside. She could not at first distinguish a word until the woman's sharper tones broke out, though in suppressed vehemence, "If ye touch her life, Barney, a mother's curse go with ye! Enough's done."

"She'll live, then, to hang us all," said the miscreant son.

"Sooner than that, I'd draw this knife across her throat with my own hands; and I'd do it again and again, sooner than they should touch your life, Barney, jewel; but no fear, the creature's asleep, or dead already with the fright of it."

The son then said something which Kathleen could not hear; the old woman replied,

"Hisht! I tell ye, no—no; the ship's now in the Cove of Cork that's to carry her over the salt seas far enough out of the way; and haven't we all she has in the world? and more, didn't she take the bit out of her own mouth to put it into mine?"

The son again spoke inaudibly; and then the voices ceased, leaving Kathleen uncertain as to her fate.

Shortly after the door opened, and the father and son again entered, and carried out the body of the wretched pedler. They seemed to have the art of treading without noise, for though Kathleen saw them move, she could not hear the sound of a footstep. The old woman was all

this time standing by her bed, and every now and then casting the light full upon her eyes; but as she remained quite still, and apparently in a deep calm sleep, they left her undisturbed, and she neither saw nor heard any more of them that night.

It ended at length—that long, long night of horror. Kathleen lay quiet till she thought the morning sufficiently advanced. She then rose, and went down into the kitchen: the old woman was lifting a pot off the fire, and nearly let it fall as Kathleen suddenly addressed her, and with an appearance of surprise and concern, asked for her friend the pedler, saying that she had just looked into his bed, supposing he was still asleep, and to her great amazement had found it empty. The old woman replied, that he had set out at early daylight for Mallow, having only just remembered that his business called him that way before he went to Cork, Kathleen affected great wonder and perplexity, and reminded the woman that he had promised to pay for her breakfast.

"An' so he did, sure enough," she replied, "and paid for it too; and by the same token, didn't I go down to Ballygowna myself for the milk and male before the sun was over the tree tops; and here it is for ye, ma colleen;" so saying, she placed a bowl of stirabout and some milk before Kathleen, and then sat down on the stool opposite to her, watching her intently.

Poor Kathleen! she had but little inclination to eat, and felt as if every bit would choke her: yet she continued to force down her breakfast, and apparently with the utmost ease and appetite, even to the last morsel set before her. While eating she inquired about the husband and son, and the old woman replied, that they had started at the first burst of light to cut turf in a bog, about five miles distant.

When Kathleen had finished her breakfast, she returned the old woman many thanks for her kind treatment, and then desired to know the nearest way to Cork. The woman Hogan informed her that the distance was about seven miles, and though the usual road was by the highway from which they had turned the preceding evening, there was a much shorter way across some fields which she pointed out, Kathleen listened attentively to her directions, and then biding farewell with many demonstrations of gratitude, she proceeded on her fearful journey.—The cool morning air, the cheerful song of the early birds, the dewy freshness of the turf, were all unnoticed and unfelt; the sense of danger was paramount, while her faculties were all alive and awake to meet it, for a feverish and unnatural strength seemed to animate her limbs. She stepped on, shortly debating with herself whether to follow the directions given by the old woman. The high road appeared the safest: on the other hand, she was aware that the slightest betrayal of mistrust would perhaps be followed by her destruction; and thus rendered brave even by the excess of her fears, she determined to take the cross path. Just as she had come to this resolution she reached the gate, which she had been directed to pass through; and without the slightest apparent hesitation she turned in and pursued the lonely way through the fields. Often did she fancy she heard footsteps stealthily following her, and never approached a hedge without expecting to see the murderers start up from behind it; yet she never once turned her head, nor quickened nor slackened her pace:

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind his tread.

She had proceeded in this manner about three-quarters of a mile, and approached a thick and dark grove of underwood, when she beheld seated upon the opposite stile an old woman in a red cloak. The sight of a human being made her heart throb more quickly for a moment; but on approaching nearer, with all her faculties sharpened by a sense of danger, she perceived that it was no old woman, but the younger Hogan, the murderer of Halloran, who was thus disguised. His face was partly concealed by a blue handkerchief tied round his head and under his chin, but she knew him by the peculiar and hideous expression of his eyes; yet with amazing and almost incredible self-possession, she continued to advance without manifesting the least alarm, or sign of recognition; and walking up to the pretended old woman, said in a clear voice, "The blessing of the morning on ye, good mother! a fine day for travellers like you and me!"

"A fine day," he replied, coughing and mumbling in a feigned voice, "but ye see—hugh ugh!—ye see I've walked this morning from the Cove of Cork, jewel, and troth I'm almost spent; and I've a bad cowlid, and a cough on me, as ye may hear;" and he coughed vehemently. Kathleen made a motion to pass the stile, but the disguised old woman, stretching out a great bony hand, seized her gown. Still Kathleen did not quail. "Musha, then, have ye nothing to give a poor old woman?" said the monster, in a whining tone.

"Nothing have I in this wide world," said Kathleen, quietly disengaging her gown, but without moving. "Sure it's only yesterday I was robbed of all I had but the little clothes on my back, and if I hadn't met with charity from others, I had starved by the wayside by this time."

"Och! and is there no place hereby where they would give a potato and a cup of cowlid water to a poor old woman ready to drop on her road?"

Kathleen instantly pointed forward to the house she had just left, and recommended her to apply there. "Sure they're good, honest people, though poor enough, God help them," she continued, "and I wish ye, mother, no worse luck than myself had, and that's a good friend to treat you to a supper—ay, and a breakfast too; there it is, ye may just see the light smoke rising like a thread over the hill, just fornest ye; and so God speed ye!"

Kathleen turned to descend the stile as she spoke, expecting to be again seized, with a strong and murderous grasp; but her enemy, secure in his disguise, and never doubting her perfect unconsciousness, suffered her to pass unmolested.

Another half-mile brought her to the top of a rising ground, within sight of the high-road; she could see crowds of people on horseback and on foot, with cars and carriages passing along in one direction; for it was, though Kathleen did not then know it, the first day of the Cork Assizes. As she gazed, she wished for the wings of a bird, that she might in a moment flee over the space which intervened between her and safety; for though she could clearly see the high-road from the hill on which she stood, a valley of broken ground at its foot, and two wide fields still separated her from it; but with the same unflinching spirit, and at the same steady pace, she proceeded onwards; and now she had reached the middle of the last field, and a thrill of newborn hope was beginning to flutter at her heart, when suddenly two men burst through the fence at the farther side of the field, and advanced towards her. One of these she thought at the first glance resembled her husband, but that it was her husband himself was an idea which never entered her mind. Her imagination was possessed with the one supreme idea of danger and death by murderous hands; she doubted not that these were the two Hogans in some new disguise, and silently recommending herself to God, she steered her heart to meet this fresh trial of her fortitude; aware, that however it might end, it must be the last. At this moment one of the men, throwing up his arms, ran forward, shouting her name, in a voice—a dear and well known voice, in which she could not be deceived: it was her husband.

The poor woman, who had hitherto supported her spirits and her self-possession, stood as if rooted to the ground, weak, motionless, and gasping for breath. A cold dew burst from every pore; her eyes tingled, her heart fluttered as though it would burst from her bosom. When she attempted to call out, and raise her hand in token of recognition, the sounds died away rattling in her throat; her arm dropped powerless at her side; and when her husband came up, and she made a last effort to spring towards him, she sank down at his feet in strong convulsions.

Reilly, much shocked at what he supposed the effect of sudden surprise, knelt down and chafed his wife's temples; his comrade ran to a neighboring spring for water, which they sprinkled over her: when, however, she returned to life, her intellects appeared to have fled forever, and she uttered such wild shrieks and exclamations, and talked so incoherently, that the men became exceedingly terrified, and poor Reilly himself almost as distracted as his wife. After vainly attempting to soothe and recover her, they at length forcibly carried her down to the inn at Ballygowna, a hamlet about a mile farther on, where she remained for several hours in a state of delirium, one fit succeeding another with little intermission.

Towards evening she became more composed, and was able to give some account of the horrible events of the preceding night. It happened, opportunely, that a gentleman of fortune in the neighborhood, and a magistrate, was riding by late that evening on his return from the Assizes at Cork, and stopped at the inn to refresh his horse. Hearing that something unusual and frightful had occurred, he alighted, and examined the woman himself, in the presence of one or two persons. Her tale appeared to him so strange and wild, from the manner in which she told it, and her account of her own courage and sufferings so exceedingly incredible, that he was at first inclined to disbelieve the whole, and suspected the poor woman either of imposture or insanity. He did not, however, think proper totally to neglect her testimony, but immediately sent off information of the murder to Cork.—Constables, with a warrant, were despatched the same night to the house of the Hogans, which

they found empty, and the inmates already fled; but after a long search the body of the wretched Halloran, and part of his property, were found concealed in a stack of old chimneys among the ruins; and this proof of guilt was decisive.—"This country was instantly 'up';" the most active search after the murderers was made by the police, assisted by all the neighboring peasantry; and before twelve o'clock the following night the three Hogans, father, mother, and son, had been apprehended in different places of concealment, and placed in safe custody. Meantime, the Coroner's inquest, having sat on the body, brought in a verdict of wilful murder.

As the judges were then at Cork, the trial came on immediately; and from its extraordinary circumstances, excited the most intense and general interest. Among the property of poor Halloran discovered in the house were a pair of shoes and a cap, which Kathleen at once identified as belonging to herself, and Reilly's silver watch was found on the younger Hogan. When questioned how they came into his possession, he sullenly refused to answer. His mother eagerly, and as if to shield her son, confessed that she was the person who had robbed Kathleen in the former part of the day, that she had gone out on the Carrick road to beg, having been left by her husband and son for two days without the means of support; and finding Kathleen asleep, she had taken away the bundle, supposing it contained food; and did not recognize her as the same person she had robbed until Kathleen offered her part of her supper.

The surgeon, who had been called to examine the body of Halloran, deposed to the cause of his death; that the old man had been first stunned by a heavy blow on the temple, and then strangled. Other witnesses deposed to the finding of the body; the previous character of the Hogans, and the circumstances attending their apprehension; but the principal witness was Kathleen. She appeared, leaning on her husband, her face was ashy pale, and her limbs too weak for support; yet, she, however, was perfectly collected, and gave her testimony with that precision, simplicity, and modesty, peculiar to her character. When she had occasion to allude to her own feelings, it was with such natural and heart-felt eloquence that the whole court was affected; and when she described her encounter at the stile, there was a general pressure and a breathless suspense; and then a loud murmur of astonishment and admiration, fully participated by even the bench of magistrates. The evidence was clear and conclusive; and the jury, without retiring, gave their verdict, guilty—Death.

When the miserable wretches were asked, in the usual form, if they had anything to say why the awful sentence should not be passed upon them, the old man replied by a look of idiotic vacancy, and was mute—the younger Hogan answered sullenly, "Nothing;" the old woman, staring wildly on her son, tried to speak; her lips moved, but without a sound—and she fell forward on the bar in strong fits.

At this moment Kathleen rushed from the arms of her husband, and throwing herself on her knees, with clasped hands, and cheeks streaming with tears, begged for mercy for the old woman. "Mercy, my lord judge!" she exclaimed. "Gentlemen, your honors, have mercy on her.—She had mercy on me! She only did their bidding. As for the bundle, and all in it, I give it to her with all my soul, so it is no robbery. The grip of hunger is hard to bear; and if she hadn't taken it then, where would I have been now?—Sure they would have killed me for the sake of it, and I would have been a corpse before your honors this moment. O mercy! mercy for her! or never will I sleep asy on this side of the grave."

The judge, though much affected, was obliged to have her forcibly carried from the court, and justice took its awful course. Sentence of death was pronounced on all the prisoners; but the woman was reprieved, and afterwards transported. The two men were executed within forty-eight hours after their conviction, on the Gallows Green.

They made no public confession of their guilt, and met their fate with sullen indifference. The awful ceremony was for a moment interrupted by an incident which afterwards furnished ample matter for wonder and speculation among the populace. It was well known that the younger Hogan had been long employed on the estate of a nobleman in the neighborhood; but having been concerned in the abduction of a young female, under circumstances of peculiar atrocity, which for want of legal evidence could not be brought home to him, he was dismissed; and, finding himself an object of general execration, he had since been skulking about the country, associating with house-breakers and other lawless and abandoned characters. At the moment the hangman was adjusting the rope round his neck, a shrill voice screamed from the midst of the crowd; "Barney Hogan! do ye mind Grace

Power, and the last words ever she spoke to ye." There was a general movement and confusion; no one could or would tell whence the voice proceeded. The wretched man was seen to change countenance for the first time, and raising himself on tiptoe gazed wildly round upon the multitude; but he said nothing, and in a few minutes he was no more.

The reader may wish to know what has become of Kathleen, our heroine, in the true sense of the word. Her story, her sufferings, her extraordinary fortitude, and pure simplicity of character, made her an object of general curiosity and interest; a subscription was raised for her, which soon amounted to a liberal sum; and they were enabled to procure Reilly's discharge from the army. Mr. L., the magistrate who had first examined her in the little inn at Ballygowna, made her a munificent present, and anxious, perhaps, to offer yet farther amends for his former doubts of her veracity, he invited Reilly, on very advantageous terms, to settle on his estate, where he rented a neat cabin, and a handsome lot of potato ground. There Reilly and his Kathleen were living some years ago, with an increasing family, and in the enjoyment of much humble happiness; and there, for aught we know to the contrary, they may be living at this day.

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON THE VERDICT AGAINST THE ITALIAN ASSASSIN.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

The sentence of death, pronounced by the French Tribunal within the last week on the conspirators of the 14th of January, is at once a conclusive commentary of the just policy of Southern Europe, and a palpable condemnation of the past revolutionary conduct of England. During several years past the English press published daily articles from their Correspondents at Naples, at Vienna, at Florence, at Paris, at Madrid, and at Lisbon, in which articles (patronised by the successive Leaders of Cabinets) the Monarchs of Catholic Europe were branded as unendurable tyrants: their laws painted as the vilest despotism: their police represented as the degraded instruments of an infamous slavery: and the national press exhibited as the mercenary tool for the extinction of public liberty. Whoever wishes to consult the files of the *Times* will learn the facts here stated, and will agree with me that the millions of Englishmen who have daily read that journal, down from the Prime Minister to the village weaver, have all joined in "the cry" of the *Times*, maligning the Thrones, believing the Institutions, and slandering the Religion of all Southern Europe. When one compares this Editorial system in one end of Europe with the plan pursued by the same papers towards their Northern neighbours; when we observe the praise bestowed on Denmark, Norway, and Sweden: or notice perchance the total silence observed towards Prussia, Hanover, and the German States, it is impossible to avoid arriving at the conviction that these English writers have been bribed, either by money or by an equivalent in Ministerial and popular patronage, to conceal the vicious policy of the North, and with equal injustice to belie the ancient and honored legislation of the South. In this case England has herself, in her own corporate national capacity, exhibited at home all the vices which she falsely ascribed to her Catholic neighbours abroad: and she now appears before mankind as having demonstrated by recent events that her own lying Press, her own past bigoted Cabinets, her own persecuting Ritual, and her own oppression towards a differing creed, was the unmistakable original from which she has long painted the picture of Southern Catholic Europe.

This is the peculiar art of English historians: they parade in public parchment laws of liberty, while concealing within the most grinding exclusion: they proclaim their Church as practising no exactions on the poor, while they wrench from the land the incredible revenue of eight and a half millions a year: they tell all mankind that English liberty is written on all the Institutions of the realm, while the motto on the Gates of Bandon is carved on every door in the empire. And when the inquirer will visit the Horse Guards, the naval colleges, the civil offices, the revenue departments, he will learn that all the exclusion, all the illiberality, all the bigotry of Catholic Europe combined in one arithmetical aggregate, does not equal in quality or in quantity the burning political, social, and religious sectarianism found even in any one English Government establishment. Like the artful cry of "Stop thief!" raised by the street robber, in order to divert pursuit, and thus escape detection, this is the old, well-practiced scheme of the English historians; ever charging other nations with their own crimes, while they themselves rob the world in their policy, and pervert mankind by a spurious Gospel and a counterfeit religion. But the hour has arrived when this