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A TALE OF CASHEL.

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Mrs. Esmond was slow in recovering from her swoon, and even when consciousness did return, strength was sadly wanting.

Never fear, Peggy, I'm not dead! The words came out, as it were, with a spasmodic effort, and a dreary emphasis on the pronoun I.

Half an hour might have passed thus, when the door-bell rang. Mrs. Esmond started to her feet gasping for breath—strove to speak, but unable to utter a word pointed to the door.

Ma'am, dear, said the remaining servant, what can it be, at all?—will I go and see?

When she again opened her eyes on surrounding objects, all the women servants of the household were around her, engaged in various efforts for her recovery.

Where is Harry? cried the half-crazed wife: where is my husband!—dead or alive, let me see him!

No one spoke, but on the instant came from the adjoining room the most sorrowful death-cry that ever thrilled mortals' heart.

Ma'am, dear, don't go in, whispered one from behind; for God's sake, don't!

A scornful laugh was the answer, the door was flung open, and Mrs. Esmond stood in the presence of her husband, but not as she parted from him some hours before.

Mrs. Esmond stood beside the bed, looking down on the heap of clay that was her husband, but no sigh or sound escaped her.

The servants were all in motion in an instant, and the sound of the doctor's familiar voice aroused the unhappy lady.

ly altered face of Mrs. Esmond—all at once she rose softly from her seat, glided like a spirit to her side, and, throwing her arm round her neck, began to pat her cheek with her cold hand.

As if Mabel's voice had broken the mighty spell that kept her senses in thrall, Mrs. Esmond started into sudden life, threw up her arms wildly, and uttered a scream so piercing, so full of anguish, that it rang in the ears of those who heard it for many a long day after.

Turning for the first time, with her hand still on Esmond's heart, her eye ran round the room till it rested on the blank, terror-stricken face of Mulligan.

Mulligan!—he is not dead—he cannot be dead—go directly for Dr. O'Grady and Dr. Hennessy!

They'll be here presently, ma'am, said the poor fellow, trying hard to keep in the tears that were choking his utterance.

Again Mrs. Esmond bent down and touched the lips of her beloved, and laid her trembling hand on his heart—then took up the hand that hung down over the bedside and felt for a pulse—when all this was done, the last spark of hope seemed to die out in her heart.

This was the signal for a general outburst of lamentation; and the grief and pity so long restrained now broke out in tears and sobs.

Ay, you may well cry, said Mrs. Esmond, you have all lost a good friend. But oh, Harry, Harry—what is any one's loss to mine?

Och, God pity me that has to tell it, said Mulligan, 'sure we found him'—here a burst of tears interrupted the sad tale—sure we found him lying on the road side about half-way between here and the Lodge.

It's little matter to me, said Mrs. Esmond drearily, as she wiped away with her handkerchief the blood that disfigured poor Harry's dead face—that face late so comely and so cheering.

You must get her away—at once, said Dr. O'Grady, who with Dr. Hennessy just then appeared at the door, both panting with excitement, and pale with horror.

Come in—come in—you'll not disturb him, O'Grady—Dr. Hennessy—look what they have done to poor Harry—he never wet you without a friendly smile, and a kind word—but he'll never smile again—h—h—never reach the hand of welcome any more—look here, and

pointing to the wound on the temple, from which only an occasional drop of blood now oozed thick and dark, she fell fainting on the body of her husband.

It is just as well, said the elder practitioner; now take her to her own room as gently as you can, and lay her on the bed.

That bullet did its work well, said Hennessy, as the two stood beside the bed looking mournfully down on the dead.

Where? and how? Mulligan described the place exactly, and the position in which he found the body.

And was there no trace of the murderer?—Is there no clue to guide us—I mean the law—in bringing the wretch to justice?

Well, there's what I'm not able to tell you sir; but I know it was one of our Mr. Esmond's horses—the steel grey—that galloped up to our stable this night without a rider—and it was our own roan mare that the man took with him.

Has Uncle Harry been sent for? asked O'Grady.

Send Pierce off immediately, then.

Yes, Pierce! you cannot go—you are wanted here, as the oldest servant of the family.

Well, but, doctor dear! I can't send Pierce, for Pierce isn't in, or hasn't been since half-past four or five.

There was something in the tone of these words that made the gentlemen start, and look fixedly at the groom.

Mulligan! there is something on your mind that you do not care to tell. But you need not fear to tell us, for you will have to tell all in a Court of Justice, and that before long.

Not against my master, sir! Oh Lord no, sir, I'll take my oath he hadn't. There was no one had any grudge against him—vo, vo, how could they?

And yet they shot him, said Hennessy with stern emphasis; they have killed one of the best landlords in Tipperary—one of the best friends the poor had—after that, who can ever say a word in their behalf?

Well, gentlemen, said Mulligan, wiping away his tears with the sleeve of his jacket, it does look very bad—very, very bad at this present time—and if any one does that deed a purpose—I mean if they knew who was in it—I'd disown Tipperary for ever and a day.

Both gentlemen turned at this and fixed their eyes on Mulligan. There was a deep meaning in his eyes, no less than in his words.

Well, well, it makes little difference, after all, how he came by his death; he is dead, God help us all this night. My the Mother of Sorrows comfort his poor wife, and protect his poor orphan.

O'Grady's voice faltered as he thus spoke, and it was only after clearing his throat several times that he said to his brother doctor:

Of course, nothing can be done here till the inquest is over. We must send at once to notify the coroner, and he raised his handkerchief to his eyes.

Mulligan was accordingly dispatched with the awful intelligence to the coroner of Mr. Esmond's murder—awful, indeed, for Dr. —, then coroner for that district of the county Tipperary, was himself a personal friend of the deceased gentleman.

Now tell me, O'Grady, what is your opinion of all this? O'Grady lowered his voice to a whisper as he replied—My opinion is that— he did not finish the sentence, for the door opened and Uncle Harry made his appearance.

Without speaking a word, but merely nodding to the doctors, the old man approached the bed, and looked long on the lifeless form of his nephew.

At last he turned and looked from one doctor to the other with heavy, bloodshot eyes, glaring fiercely from under his bushy brows.

So it appears, Mr. Esmond, sadly said O'Grady.

Well, there's what it is to be a good landlord! There was a fierceness of sarcasm in these words that cannot be described.

Take care, Mr. Esmond—take care! said Hennessy, with that slight before you, how can you speak so?

Excuse me, said the doctor to O'Grady, I will go and see how poor Mrs. Esmond is.

No, sir; I do not forget myself or you either, and so saying, Hennessy left the left room. As he passed along the corridor to the remote apartment whither Mrs. Esmond had been conveyed, he encountered more than one group of the servants with certain women of the neighborhood whom the news had already reached.

I mean just what I said, replied the doctor slowly and emphatically, that my poor friend never incurred the fearful penalty he has paid.

Excuse me, said the doctor to O'Grady, I will go and see how poor Mrs. Esmond is.

Well, how is that, Molly dear? and all the rest denied their eyes, and held their breath to listen to one so well entitled to speak.

Well, well, it makes little difference, after all, how he came by his death; he is dead, God help us all this night.

O'Grady's voice faltered as he thus spoke,

After they were all gone to bed that night, myself and Nancy being the last in the kitchen, we thought we'd rake the ashes smooth to see if there'd be any feet coming or going.

Well, Molly, an' what come of it? As true as I'm a living woman this night, an' the master a dead man, Lord receive his soul in glory—there was the mark of a foot in the ashes—a man's foot, too, an' for all the world like his, and it turned to't the door!

When Dr. Hennessy knocked at the door of the room where Mrs. Esmond was, it was opened by Mrs. O'Grady, and he found within Mrs. Esmond, senior, and Aunt Winifred, all three having come with Uncle Harry.

To the doctor's inquiry of how she found herself, Mrs. Esmond replied, in low, faint accents—Oh! there is no fear of me—I am well enough—too well—but Dr. Hennessy! she added with sudden animation, raising herself from her reclining posture in a large arm-chair.

I believe not—but why do you ask?—did you want him? What him? Mrs. Esmond repeated with a visible shudder; oh no! no! no! The sight of him would be death—death! and moaning piteously, she fell back again in the chair.

Why, surely, Mrs. Esmond, said the doctor, you cannot suspect him—what motive could induce him—or, indeed, any one else, to commit so black a crime?

I know not, doctor, I know not; but, and the unhappy lady paused, gasping for breath, but from something he said to me just before leaving the house—and after my poor—my poor Harry was gone—I fear—oh! I am almost certain that he had—at least—something to do with it! She could say no more.

The horror of this announcement blanched every cheek, and the ladies were, for once, struck dumb. It was only for a moment, however, for, long before the doctor could make up his mind as to what he should say, Aunt Winifred broke out with:—

La me! we might have known there was something bad about the fellow; don't you remember the voice we heard on Hallow-eve night?

Yes, and that sad affair of the ring, my dear Mrs. Esmond? subjoined Mrs. O'Grady; you know I told you that you should not have given your wedding-ring for such a purpose! my dear, it was very thoughtless of you to do it—indeed, indeed it was. My! my! my! who could have foreseen this?—though I must say that I had a sort of presentiment that night that something very bad was going to happen.

My dear Mrs. Esmond! said Dr. Hennessy anxious himself to rid her, if possible, of these Job's comforters, had you not better lie down on the bed, and remain quiet a while. I see you are completely exhausted—Aunt Martha will stay with you, and Mrs. O'Grady and Aunt Winifred can go down stairs and attend to the household affairs.

Oh, Doctor Hennessy!—oh, Aunt Martha! she sobbed, how can I stay here—and Harry so near me—dead?—oh! no, no—I cannot—cannot I stay?—and she rose from her seat, not withstanding the gentle efforts of Aunt Martha to prevent her.

Now, Aunt Martha! do not—do not ask to keep me! she faltered out