

A white cloth was interposed between it and the table or board, falling over the sides nearly to the ground, and a plate of salt was placed on its breast.

The dead body was that of a man, probably some thirty years of age, and the ghastliness of the countenance was fearfully enhanced, not only by the dull glimmer of the unsnuffed candles, but by a gaping wound, as though from a sword cut, which extended from the left temple to the corner of the mouth, laying open the cheek. Evidently no effort had been made to hide or cover the wound; and as evidently, the contemplation of this terrific sight was stirring up the thoughts and feelings of the excitable beings around me, friends and relations of the slain man, to purposes of deadly revenge.

For the man had been slain. I remembered now, that while at C—, I had heard of a recent skirmish between a party of revenue officers and a band of illicit distillers and smugglers on the mountains, whose secret haunts had been discovered. Unhappily, these events were too common in Ireland at that time to attract much attention; and beyond the fact that blood had been shed, I had neither sought nor heard particulars of the conflict. All this came into my mind as I looked on, and if escape had been possible, I would gladly have retreated to the bare hillside and the pitiless storm.

But escape was not possible. My entrance had not been noticed, and, as I stood in the shadow cast by a projecting jamb of the rude hearth, I had time to make the observations I have jotted down; but before a minute had passed away, the eyes of one of the company rested on me, and the next instant I was dragged into the middle of the apartment, and surrounded by the infuriated throng, who wanted only a victim on whom to expend their insane vengeance; and the first words I heard uttered convinced me that I was mistaken for an emissary of the government—the detested government, whose minions had, as they would have argued, robbed them of their property, and murdered their friend.

Happily no deadly weapons were at that time in their hands, and in a momentary pause in the storm of execrations which fell upon me, I strove to make myself heard. Rapidly, I endeavoured to explain that I was an unfortunate traveller, benighted and storm-braten, innocent of all evil intention towards, or even of any knowledge of them, and seeking only shelter and rest. It would have been better for me not to have spoken; my speech betrayed me for an English-

man, and my voice was drowned in bitter curses and awful threatenings.

'Hear to the murdering willian!' shrieked one, aiming at me a heavy blow, which I happily avoided. But other blows fell upon me thick, and I was beaten to the ground. It was evidently a struggle for life, and never had my life appeared in such imminent peril as now, and death so near. The number of my assailants however, contributed something to my immediate preservation; for their furious strokes dealt almost at random, fell as often on each other as on their intended victim; and, availing myself of the confusion that ensued, I rose bleeding, and staggered to my feet.

Meanwhile the females had fled, shrieking, to the only other apartment the cabin contained, all but one aged woman, of stout masculine proportions, whom I had not before observed, but who now threw herself into the *mêlée*, and with her powerful arm arrested more than one hand raised against me.

'A purty night's work ye are afther making of this, Murther Donovan,' she shouted, seizing my first assailant by the collar, and dragging him violently aside. 'Is this the way ye treat a stranger that—'

The voice was enough. Shaking off, with a sudden exertion of strength, which surprised me then, and which surprises me now that I recall the scene to memory, the hold which two or three strong men had on me, I sprang forwards, grappled the hand of the friendly and energetic pleader, and looked her full in the face.

'Peggy Magrath!' I cried, 'have you forgotten Roland Leigh?'

Had a thunderbolt fallen in the midst of that tumultuous throng, it would not have been more startling than that sudden exclamation of mine. Hands raised against me with murderous intention were suspended in mid-air, shouts of vengeance were arrested in their utterance, and eyes, which had the moment before glared upon me in fury, now opened wider with curiosity. For a moment the woman held me at arm's length putting aside, with her disengaged hand, the hair which had fallen over my forehead. The next moment I was clasped to her bosom, which heaved with strange emotion.

'Core of my heart! Me own darling! Come to me—closer—closer!' she sobbed out, pressing me yet tighter, covering my cheeks with kisses and tears, and waving one hand over me, as though to protect me from further injury. But there was no need. The foremost among the enraged assailants speedily arranged them-

selves by our side, and I soon found that I was in almost as much danger of being overpowered by the energetic demonstrations of kindness and prudence of Peggy's excitable and impulsive countrymen, as I had been of destruction from their fierce and unreasonable enmity. But I shall not prolong my description of this scene. I could not if I would; for the excitement of that desperate struggle, added to the fatigue I had undergone in the storm which yet raged, and the sudden change from the cold night air to the stifling atmosphere of that cabin, nearly overcame me. I became dizzy, and should have fallen but for Peggy's strong arm. I gasped for breath, cried out feebly for air, and to my inexpressible relief, scarcely knowing how, I found myself gently half led and half supported out of that fearful death chamber, and into another and a near cabin—Peggy Magrath's own.

CHAPTER LVII.
AND LAST.

I have little more to add to my story, and what remains shall be told in few words. Before morning the storm cleared away, and the sun rose on a scene of wild grandeur, which I have rarely seen surpassed. Meanwhile, divested of my wet garments, and resting on a couch of dry heath, near to a blazing fire in poor Peggy's cabin, with her seated by my side, I heard the history of her wandering; how she had sought me in vain at Whiskers' Rents after her release from prison—how shame for her disgrace had driven her to another, and an obscurer part of the wide town; but how, constantly, her thoughts rested upon me—and how, at last, hope forsook her, and she determined to end her days in "poor Ould Ireland, among her own people." I listened to this till sleep overpowered me; and when I awoke, with the sun darting in through the chink of the mud wall, poor Peggy was preparing for me a breakfast which an epicure would not have disdained. I found out afterwards that, while I was sleeping, my dear old nurse had walked miles to procure the materials of which it was composed, with the same devotedness of heart and purpose as when, many years before, she had begged "a drink of buttermilk" for her poor little orphan boy.

I stayed two days in the mountain valley, and witnessed the funeral of the dead man, on whose wake I had intruded; but I shall not describe this. Meanwhile the men who had so nearly sacrificed me to their blind revenge, almost overwhelmed me with their contrition and proffered services. They said they would go bare-