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## THE WRECK OF THE DILLONS.

A TALE OF TIPPERARY—FOUNDED ON FACTS.  
(From the Dublin University Magazine.)  
CHAPTER VIII.

The idea that his daughter had the unblushing effrontery to return to the neighborhood, after her supposed delinquency, struck Pat Dillon, if possible, with greater wrath than he had felt for the last three weeks. The compassion expressed for her by the neighbors, in consideration of her youth and her previous good conduct, only hardened his heart, and made him the more unlikely to forgive her. He considered it a slur cast upon his good name, that any excuse could be found to palliate her misconduct. Far better would he have been pleased, if the whole country around had joined in condemning her supposed guilt as something monstrous and hitherto unheard of. His sons felt equal fury, regarding their sister with feelings that might have done honor to Spartans of old, nor was their mother at all more lenient towards her unhappy child. Kitty alone, of all the family, experienced any thing like compassion for the discarded one; but she was peremptorily ordered not to see or speak to her.

Nelly remained under the friendly shelter of Bet Fagan's roof, a prey to the most despairing feelings. There was one person very much interested in the misfortunes of the young girl, who, nevertheless, spoke but little on the subject. This was Dennis Ryan. Doubtless, despised as she felt herself to be, Nelly would rather have suffered her right hand to be lopped off than deign to ask an interview with her lover, when he did not seek it of himself, and this Dennis was too proud to do.

Upright and honest, with a reputation never blemished, Ryan was yet more cautious than generous; and his affection for Nelly, powerful as it may have been, was not as powerful as his fear of being the mock and laughing-stock of the country; and though he had heard the account of Nelly, and was aware that she had always been the most truthful of beings, he held aloof waiting for further evidence in her favor. All this may have been very natural and prudent; but Nelly felt she would have acted different towards him. As each day passed, she became more hopeless, comprehending more and more clearly how difficult it would be for her to dispel the cloud of shame resting upon her. Bet Fagan had at length persuaded her friend, Dan Phelan, to set out for Clonmel, to seek an interview with Fogarty, who was waiting his trial at the next assizes for the crime of murder. By the treachery of one of his companions in guilt, he had been betrayed to the police, who, after much fruitless search among the Galtee mountains, at length captured him near Limerick, where he was about to embark for America.—Upon the evening that he had carried off Nelly, a hint was given him by a comrade that he was to be thus betrayed, and in consequence of the information, he abandoned the usual hiding-place resorted to by himself and his lawless companions. Having deposited the senseless form of Nelly in the cave, he found it necessary to make his escape in a different direction with all speed, hoping to evade the police as he had often done before. But animated by the fiercest feelings of revenge, his pursuers were determined to hunt to the death, and after some time Fogarty and a few others were made prisoners.

Dan Phelan was not exactly the sort of person calculated for such a mission as Bet Fagan dispatched him on to the jail. Peter received him sullenly, and as the poor stupid old man scratched his head, and hemmed and hawed, ignorant of how he should commence his enquiries, Fogarty maintained a dogged silence, by no means encouraging. At last Dan was necessitated to take his departure as wise as he came, with a very unsatisfactory report to bring Mrs. Fagan. Nelly, who had clung to the hope that Fogarty might have honesty enough to clear her character, was woefully disappointed at the ill-success of Phelan's efforts; and the blow fell so heavily upon her that she became very ill, and was for many weeks laid upon a sick bed, while Bet Fagan and her old friend, Norry Croon, nursed her with unwearying kindness.

Father McCabe, the parish priest, was called in to see her, and from his manner and a few words he dropped upon hearing Nelly's confession, Bet felt, at last, almost convinced that she was as innocent as she declared herself to be.

"Bedad," thought she, "I'll try worst more again, afore it is too late to get her righted, an' sure if I fail I can't help it: no one can do more than their best."

The assizes had commenced unusually early this year, and Fogarty was now a condemned criminal, awaiting the hour of execution in his prison cell. One morning Bet set on foot for Clonmel, without mentioning the object of her journey to any one. It was a raw day; sleet was drifting over the hills and valleys; leaden clouds darkened the sky; but unwavering from

her purpose the widow heeded not the weather. Her short, sturdy figure might have been seen moving steadily along, undaunted by wind or snow. Arrived at the town, she made her way at once to the jail, and asked permission to see Fogarty. After some difficulty it was granted, and she soon found herself in the presence of the condemned man. Ever since his capture and conviction, Peter had preserved a most undaunted bearing. The fire of his eye still burned brightly as ever; the wild scornful expression of his countenance remained unchanged. He might have stood as a model for any bandit hero of romance. He had listened to the death-sentence pronounced in court without moving a muscle of his face; yet, when Bet Fagan stood before him, his eye quailed, and for a few moments he appeared struck with deep emotion.

"Pety," said the widow, kindly, while her voice quivered slightly; "it isn't here I expected to meet you next, when we parted after the dance in Tim Scully's barn."

He made no reply, and Mrs. Fagan continued, "I'm sorry for you, an' that's the truth, Pety. There's a world o' trouble kem over the neighborhood since that same night. Poor Nelly Dillon was as blithe an' merry at the dance, an' now, sure enough no one 'd think she was the same colleen; it's on her account I'm here to-day, Pety, and as ye expect marcy for yer sowl when ye lave the world, I'd have you make a confession of what passed to make her quit her father's house the way she did. There isn't one of her people 'ill spake to her. She'll nivir hold up her head unless somethin's done to make the country think betther of her than they do."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Fogarty, gloomily.

"I want you to tell me, in the name of all that's blessed, did Nelly go wid you wid her own free will and consent?"

"Does she say she did?" asked Peter, fixing his eye with a mocking expression on Bet's face.

"Never heed what she says," said the widow, exasperatedly; "but spake for yourself."

"Whatever Nelly says, is true," replied Fogarty.

"But that won't do," rejoined Bet. "Her people, more shame for them, won't b'lieve her own story; they're as black agin her as if she was no more to them than a stone wall. If I was you, Pety, I'd spake out the truth, if it was only to shame them."

Mrs. Fagan was a skilful diplomate, and had very cunningly spoken the last words.

"Does Nelly curse me?" asked Fogarty.

"Curse you, Pety! Ah! not she! Nelly isn't the one to curse you, let who will; but she's frettin' her life out about every thing. D'ye think she forgets the time when you and she was courtin', an' you not higher than myself? Curse you, indeed! I'm afraid it was only too well she liked you always, an' there's the truth for you! Poor child! she's lyin' as wake as an infant now, a'most dead in my house at home; an' there isn't one of her people 'ill put their foot inside the door."

"Does Dinny Ryan be often in wid you?"

"Dinny, is it! Musha, God help ye! Dinny doesn't show his nose in the house. He's as black agin her as anybody else; maybe worse. I'd just like to let him see he was mistaken about Nelly, if it was only for spite."

"What can I do for her? what is it you want, Mrs. Fagan?"

"I want you to confess out right, how it was that Nelly went away wid you, so that her people may know the truth; an' if you could it all afore Father McCabe, an' gave him lave to make it known to the Dillons and everybody else in the place, sure that 'd be enough."

"I haven't got more than a few days to live," said Fogarty, coolly; "I'm to be hung on Tuesday."

"Sure, there's time enough for your confession, anyhow," replied Bet, in a business-like manner. "It wouldn't take more than an hour or two to see Father McCabe and tell him every thing."

"Well, maybe you had best send him," observed Fogarty, after a pause.

"An' what 'ill you tell him?" asked Bet, who now began to entertain doubts about the sort of a confession Pety might make.

"I'll tell him what's the truth."

"You're not jokin', Pety?"

"Sorra joke," replied the condemned man.

"But what's the truth?" persisted the widow.

"Father McCabe 'ill tell you," replied Fogarty.

"Pety," said Mrs. Fagan, solemnly, "remember that we'll part shortly, never to meet again in this life, and whatever you say, let it be nothing that will belie Nelly."

Fogarty looked impenetrable, and hurriedly said—

"Send Father McCabe."

As the turnkey came to say he must put an end to the interview, Bet shook hands kindly with Fogarty, just as she had, during her life-

time, shaken hands with scores of men about to be hung, and wiping some tears from her eyes, left the jail. Back again, through wind and sleet, with the gathering gloom of night descending upon all outward objects, the widow went home. She was afraid to mention anything of her expedition to Nelly for fear of further disappointment; and when the girl anxiously enquired where she had been all day, she vaguely replied—

"Only a piece off, alannah, seein' a frin, an' I was delayed longer than I intinded."

"What day is this?" inquired Nelly.

"It's Friday, sure."

"Saturday, Sunday, Monday," muttered Nelly, as if to herself, adding aloud, "there's only three days for him to live, Mrs. Fagan, he will be hung on Tuesday."

"Well, an' if he is, sure the world will be well rid of him," replied Bet, shortly.

Nelly said no more; but the widow looked uneasily at her as she saw her clasp her hands convulsively together. A long silence ensued, only broken by the clinking of pots and pans, and the whirr and crackle of the blazing wood that was helping to get the supper ready. Nelly was sitting by the fire, looking beautifully though fearfully emaciated.

"What way d'ye feel the night?" Bet asked, after a long survey of her pale features.

"I feel as if I was dead, Mrs. Fagan," said Nelly.

"Lord be good to us! How's that, an' you sittin' there alive enough?"

"I feel as if I was dead, Bet Fagan, an' as if God had cursed me so that I was condemned to walk the earth, a spirit that nobody wanted to see."

"It's a sin to talk that way, agra," said Bet, looking a little alarmed. Nelly certainly looked rather spectral; but there was the light of an unquenchable pride burning still in her eye.

The next morning was Saturday, a wild, dreary day, and Bet went early to Father McCabe to give him Pety Fogarty's message. The priest was a good-natured man, and he lost no time in repairing, in his gig, to Clonmel. Mrs. Fagan saw him off with great satisfaction, and yet, when he was gone, a dull misgiving crossed her mind that Fogarty might, possibly, make matters worse than ever by stating falsehoods in his dying confession.

"Musha, he was always full of thricks and divilment," she muttered as she walked slowly on her way home; "an' he no more cared for priest nor mass than the haythen."

This reflection induced Bet to take a gloomy view of affairs for the remainder of the day; and she was glad that she had not given Nelly any reason to hope. She felt very uneasy, indeed; and when she heard the well-known rattle of the priest's gig returning, she ran out in the dusky evening to hear the worst at once from him.

"Well, your riverence, what news have you for me?" she asked, as Father McCabe alighted at his own house.

"You mustn't be impatient, Bet," replied his riverence, slowly and calmly; "whatever I have to say, you can't hear it till to-morrow."

"Oh, musha, Father John, let me hear it this munit," entreated the widow, in an agony of surprise.

"To-morrow, Bet—to-morrow," replied the priest.

"Oh! it's no good," moaned the woman, striking her hands together. "Sure, if it was, you would spake it out at woust."

"You must bear all things patiently," rejoined Father McCabe, gravely.

"Oh, sorra bit o' patience ever I had, your riverence," said Bet, with frankness. "If you would tell me at woust what news you have, I'd sleep sound the night."

"To-morrow I will—not till then."

"To-morrow's Sunday, an' sure there 'ill be three masses an' a sermon, an' it 'ill be all hours afore I can see your riverence to spake to."

"Never mind that. Come to Mass as you do every Sunday, and don't be thinking of any thing but your prayers," replied Father John, as he unrelentingly entered the house and closed the door.

### CONCLUSION.

The Sunday broke over the world bright and cloudless, and from far and near the peasants were flocking to Father McCabe's chapel. Bet Fagan, as usual, got ready for the twelve o'clock Mass, and as she left the house she recommended Nelly to the attention of old Norry Croon. The chapel was very much crowded that day, and Bet found considerable difficulty in pushing her way through the mass of people that thronged the building. The Dillons were there, praying devoutly, while Dennis Ryan could be seen among the crowd busy with his missal. Nobody was more wrapt in devotion than the widow, who swayed herself backwards and forwards in a perfect agony of piety, and a murmur like the swell of the ocean occasionally arose through the

building as the enthusiasm of the people waxed greater and greater. At length the sermon commenced. Everybody was attentive. A pin might have been heard dropping, so still was the congregation. At the conclusion of the discourse, Father McCabe, according to his custom, entered into some secular affairs of the parish. The worthy pastor kept his most remarkable piece of information till the last, sunning up all by an astounding disclosure—

"And now, good people," said he, as he turned his face full round to the congregation, "I'm going to tell you something that will astonish and gratify you all; and it is no less than that I have the power to declare to you this blessed day that Pat Dillon's daughter, Nelly, is as innocent as an unborn child. I heard the confession from Peter Fogarty's own lips in Clonmel jail, yesterday;—and it was his wish that I would tell it before you all this day."

Here followed, amid the breathless silence of the hearers, a brief, but correct, account of events which the reader is already acquainted with; and when Father John ceased to speak, a cheer burst from the crowd that shook the chapel windows. A rush was made from the building without delay; and Bet Fagan, being near the door, got out first, and with the speed of lightning rushed to her own house, where she communicated to Nelly the glad tidings she had heard, and which were now known to everybody, far and near, in the parish. On being made acquainted with this intelligence, Nelly slowly arose from her bed, where she had been reclining. A bright flush burned on her cheek, a bright light flashed in her eyes; but her speech seemed to fail her, for she uttered no word.

"Oh, thin, it's meself's the glad woman this day!" exclaimed Bet, clapping her hands, and swaying her head to and fro. Norry Croon now confronted her, with her hands in her sides, and her hard, withered face agitated in every feature—

"Didn't I tell you, Bet Fagan, that I never believed a word agin Nelly Dillon. Didn't I say she wasn't the one to disgrace her people?"

"Ye did, Norry, ye did," murmured the widow, who was now fairly shedding tears of thankfulness.

A mighty surging sound was now heard without, and presently the doorway was blocked up by figures all anxious to enter the house. Pat Dillon, with his wife and daughter, Kitty, were given precedence, of course, and rushing in, they frantically embraced Nelly, who stood upright in the middle of the floor.

"Stand back, all o' ye!" said Mrs. Fagan, as she motioned to the crowd outside to keep off, and, obeying her commands, the people moved from the door, leaving Nelly's relatives to speak to her in peace.

"Nelly, my own jewel, you'll come back to your poor father woust more!" cried Dillon, triumphantly.

"An' it's Dinny Ryan's the proud man this day!" exclaimed the mother, weeping. Kitty, unable to utter a word, hung upon her sister's neck, shedding tears. Nelly made no reply to any expression of endearment, and returned no caress. When Dennis Ryan rushed joyously into the house, and prepared to seize her hand with enthusiasm, the girl drew back proudly, and in a voice that thrilled through the nerves of her hearers, spoke out at last—

"Keep back, Dennis Ryan! keep back all o' ye! You're nothin' to me, an' I'm nothin' to ye."

"Nelly, dear Nelly!" said Pat Fagan, rebukingly.

"Ay, nothin' to me," repeated Nelly, with flashing eyes, while the proud dilatation of her beautifully formed nostrils lent an expression of wondrous power to her countenance. A painter might have chosen her as a personification of proud woman's anger—"I'm nothin' to one o' ye!"

"Yis, yis," said Dillon, soothingly, "you are just the same to me as ever you were. You are my own pet child again."

"But you're not the same to me," replied Nelly bitterly.

"I am, I am, me poor child," continued Dillon; "an' your father's house is there ready to receive you this munit; so you had better come home at woust."

"Never!" cried the girl vehemently. "Never will I cross the threshold of the door that shut me out in the dark night. No, Pat Dillon;—I'm your daughter no longer. I've no father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother; I haven't one to love me but the man that 'd be hung in the front of Clonmel jail the day after to-morrow!"

"Nelly, acushla!" murmured Bet Fagan, reproachfully.

"You were kind to me, Bet Fagan," said Nelly, taking her hand; "an' you, Norry Croon, knew me better than my own people; you trusted me more than the man who wanted me for his wife; but still there wasn't one o' ye loved and trusted me like Peter Fogarty. Wid all his

crimes on his head, an' great a wrong as he had done me, an' great sorrow as he gave my heart, I'd marry him this blessed day, in Father McCabe's chapel, if he was here, free out of prison."

The neighbors had by this time gathered into the house, and stood looking on aghast. Whispers ran round to the effect that Nelly must have grown light in her head; but some were there who thought she "sarved her people right."

"You'll come this munit," cried Pat Dillon, whose anger was now roused, and he advanced to take his daughter's arm in a firm grasp.

"Never, never!" exclaimed Nelly, shaking his hand off with wild eagerness.

"If there wasn't another roof to shelter me in the world, I'd perish rather than put a foot inside your house. I loved you woust, father; I loved you so well that I broke my own heart for you! I did what I could to forget the boy that was as dear to me as my own life for many a long year, just because you didn't like him; and I strove to like another till I did like him; and I gave my promise to marry him, an' God sees it was a promise I'd have kept; but I'm sorry to the heart now that ever I did like, for the love I threw away was the only true love among ye all. Ay, Pety Fogarty, murderer, robber, whatever ye are, I'd marry you this munit if you were here to take me. But we will be together soon enough."

Fiercely wroth, Dillon made another rush towards the excited girl, but many hands held him back.

"You'll not lay a finger on her," cried Bet Fagan. "Ye deserve this, every one of ye, for ye were like Turks to her, an' ye know it."

Mrs. Dillon looked nearly as stern as her husband; and her sons, who were now entering, would have almost torn their sister limb from limb, so great was their indignation, had not the crowd forced them out again. While much bustle ensued, Nelly's strength became exhausted, and seeing her sway to and fro, as she stood in the centre of the floor, Bet Fagan rushed to catch her in her arms. The girl's head dropped heavily on her shoulder, and seeing the expression of her features, Norry Croon shrieked out—

"She's dyin', she's dyin'; lave the house every one o' ye."

The crowd fell back as Norry waved her hand to them, but the Dillons did not move.—Bet laid Nelly on the bed, and Mrs. Dillon, now overcome with a mother's feelings, ran forward to her; but gathering up all her strength the girl pushed the unfortunate woman away from her with scorn and indignation.

Pat Dillon at length burst into tears, and wrung his hands despairingly.

"Nelly, Nelly!" he exclaimed wildly, "won't ye look on your own father, an' say you forgive him?"

Fixed and glazed, the daughter's eyes were fastened on vacancy; the things of this world had vanished from their sight forever; the life-blood was already growing stagnant in the veins.

"She is dead!" whispered Norry Croon, bending over her; "the breath's gone."

A wild cry, like the shriek of some forest beast—discordant, ferocious, despairing—rang through the room; and rushing towards the bed, Pat Dillon seized the senseless form of his child in his arms and bore it from the house in a frenzy fearful to behold; and with the speed of madness, he gained his own house ere they could stop him. Flinging the corpse on the bed in the kitchen, he exclaimed,

"She'll not be waked a night out o' her father's house, anyhow," and then burst into a hueous peal of laughter.

Bet remembered his own words, spoken the morning after Nelly's appearance that she should never cross his threshold alive again. It was her duty to lay out the dead body, and very mournfully she did it. Never had she dressed a fairer corpse. The wake that night in the Dillons' house was a strange one. The neighbors from far and near had gathered to it—all except Dennis Ryan; and though there were pipes and tobacco in abundance, and plenty of whiskey, there was little merriment. One alone of those present joked and laughed with a wild revelry that struck horror into the hearts of the rest. It was the father of her who lay lifeless before their eyes. The light of reason had vanished forever from Pat Dillon's mind; and when his child's corpse was lowered in its last earthly resting place upon the same day that witnessed the execution and burial of Peter Fogarty, he clasped his hands uttering unearthly shouts of triumph. From that time he was a confirmed maniac, gradually sinking into idocy. His family became scattered; the sons departed to America and Australia; his wife and daughter, Kitty, did not survive their misfortunes very long; and Pat became a miserable object, wandering from town to town, generally attired in a cast-off soldier's uniform. He was soon known at Thurles, Clonmel, and Cashel; and till his hair was gray, and his form bent with age, he continued to live a poor idiot. His farm passed