

TALES OF THE JURY ROOM

By Gerald Griffin

THE ELEVENTH JURYMAN'S TALE

THE PROPHECY

Morris Moran lived on the outskirts of a retired village, in the county of Clare. He was an industrious, harmless, quiet little man; and though, like Sancho Panza, not unwilling upon occasion when passion prompted to punish an adversary at fifty cuffs, he had the reputation of being a very timid and apprehensive being. He could not well be called a coward, in the usual acceptance of that term, for he felt no sense of shame or indignity in any effort, which he conceived it his duty to make, to escape personal danger, and would willingly in such instances have every thought or feeling of his mind published on the market cross. He could never, indeed, conceive the object or utility of that self appreciation which makes men so very captious of indignity, nor had he a notion of that enthusiastic passion for earthly fame, which leads the soldier to seek

Even at the cannon's mouth." True glory with him lay either in avoiding or dexterously escaping from danger, and his most important study from the time he began to reason, was to discover how he could best fulfil the primary law of nature—self-preservation. This he considered to be no such easy matter as it was held to be by ordinary persons. On the contrary with him, the vigilance and foresight, the multiplicity of ways in which a man may be put out of existence, made it seem excessively difficult for him to accomplish his purpose of remaining a denizen of this subnary sphere for any considerable length of time. By a life of exercise and temperance he might perhaps for some years escape the evils of disease; by never venturing on ship board he might avoid drowning; by the ready egress from his little cabin, which two frail doors afforded, the danger of a conflagration might be averted, and a quiet harmless life might be led; but he would often protect him from the perils of the law. But what was to preserve him from the thousand incidental dangers inseparable from the circumstances of humanity—subject to have his cabin entered by Terryalts at any hour of the night—to be waylaid by murderers on the highway returning from fair or market—to be run over by a restive horse—to be gored by a furious bull—or to have a fissure made in his skull, by the falling of a slate from the house-top in the great town. The shades in fact of a hundred deaths stalked through his imagination like the ghosts by Richard's couch, whenever he ventured to calculate the positive chances in favour of a prolonged existence; a calculation, indeed, not usually entered into by the mass of mankind (actuaries of Insurance companies excepted) with that grave consideration which its deep interest merits.

But of all the ministers of death, in a world out of which some one hourly makes an unexpected exit, none appeared so frightful to him as the implements of human warfare; and of all those implements, none so specially terrible as the barrelled gun. When one of these happened accidentally to be placed near him, he would often break out of some fit of musing, and gaze upon it with all the perplexity which one might be supposed to feel in investigating the end and aim of some complicated piece of machinery, when first introduced amongst men. He would view the lock and screws and various devices with a suspicious wonder; he would, with a sort of nervous creeping, fix his attention upon the trigger, whose dreadful click was so often the forerunner of blood and slaughter; or look down in palsied horror, like a fascinated bird, into the smoking dark mouth of the barrel as if he thought fire and thunder, without any human agency might suddenly issue from its secret recesses. He sometimes, too, pondered in no little amazement on the prospect which a quiet monk could have proposed to himself in the invention of gunpowder, and was never fully convinced that such contrivances or discoveries originated in anything beyond the mere pastime of busy and ingenious minds until he saw an account of the construction of Mr. Perkins' celebrated steam gun which was capable of destroying so many hundred men in a minute. He heard this invention so highly applauded by most persons, and spoken of disparagingly only by those who doubted its application on a larger scale, or the probability of its effecting an extent of slaughter proportioned to any increase of magnitude, that he began at length to suspect man was a much more bloody and ferocious animal than he had at all imagined.

The early period of Morris' life was the golden passage of his existence, during which he knew neither pain nor trouble. When in the gloom and mistrust of after times he glanced back in recollection over its many sunny hours, he felt as if the better age of the world had gone by with his boyhood, and the future was to be to him one dark struggle with the iron destinies of a corrupt generation. Alas! for the days when he sprung from his bed in the morning, like the lark from the nest, as the slanting beams from the eastward brought announcement of the dawn! when he whistled along the fields amidst dew and perfume and health breathing airs, too full of the bless-

ings which nature offers to us so freely and often so vainly to entertain an earthly care or sorrow, when he whistled his hurly on the soft green turf, and sent the exulting ball bounding away from its pursuers; or essayed at innocent display in the evening dance, when all the happy young hearts of the village were assembled round the bag-pipes at the meeting of the roads. There were then no police—no soldiery to disturb his thoughts by day, or bring him an unquiet dream by night. The plough was seen dividing the furrows, or the spade turning up the soil, where dragons were afterwards seen daily galloping with brandished broadsword in pursuit of the terror-stricken peasantry, and the toil worn labourer rested on the hill-side on his way home, watching the sun going down in the far waters of the west, without fear of the Curfew.

Before touching on the events of the perilous times more strictly connected with our present story, it is necessary to advert to an incident, which, though occurring in the earlier and happier period of Morris' life, made an impression on his mind that in some degree influenced his after fortunes.

It happened on some one of those long-gone November eves, which, while yet a youth, he had spent in his father's cabin, that a number of persons, young and old, were gathered round a blazing fire, a merry making, in honour of the festival. It was a scene of fun and uproar rarely surpassed even on so moving a night. At one side of the hearth stone, were sly-faced maidens, intently watching the burning of some nuts, with which their fortunes were wound up, and giving notice now and then, when an explosion took place, by peals of laughter reverberated from the rafters. At the other, was a party equally delighted at the merry game of snap- apple, and in the centre of the floor, most boisterous of all, the younger fry stripped to the waist, amusing themselves by diving their heads into a tub of water after a huge floating red-streak, which was to become the prize of him who should bring it up in his mouth. Behind the revellers, and a little apart, were seated the grave and reverend seniors of the assembly, with their ancient partners, who entered into the enjoyments of the several groups, with all the zest of earlier life, though displayed in a more subdued and quiet manner. Time it is admitted, will bide no man's bidding, and the happiest hours must have an end. As the night wore away, the spirits of the gayest began to flag, the mirth became fainter, and several of the guests successively departed for their homes. The tired few who remained, gathered more closely round the decaying fire, and endeavoured to repel the advance of approaching sleep, by recounting strange stories, of ghosts, or fairies, to one another. A deaf and dumb old woman, a fortune-teller by profession, who sat huddled up in a corner, dead to the absorbing interest of the wonderful legends which engaged the attention of all around her, was the first whose drowsy notes gave notice of her passage to the land of dreams. As an example so tempting was portentive of a close to their night's amusement, it was at once agreed upon to awaken her, and for the more effectual prevention of a return of the drowsy influence, to invite a display of her prophetic skill in reference to the fortunes of the little party. Old Vauria, (the dummy was called), evinced sundry symptoms of displeasure at the unceremonious disturbance, and it was only after many humiliating apologies on the part of the principles, and with much peevish asperity of manner, that she at last condescended to reveal those mysterious destinies, which to ordinary mortals lie profoundly hidden in the future. Morris happened to be the first who was pointed out to her, as an interesting study. She fixed her eyes on him, with a look of intense scrutiny, that made him shrink back from the circle—paused for a few minutes, looked down thoughtfully, and then gazed upon him again. In a little while, she turned from him, broke a small branch or rod from a broom that lay near her, and smoothing the ashes on the hearth at her feet, began to trace lines in it. The deepest silence fell upon the group, as they watched with anxious curiosity, the progress of her sketch, but nothing could equal their astonishment, or Morris' horror, when there appeared, clearly delineated on the smooth grey surface before them, a lofty gallows. Some, who had little faith in the fortune-teller's gift of prescience, were amazed at the occurrence, but the credulous majority, fully assured of her power, gazed upon the fearful design with feelings of awe and apprehension. Many offered serious conjectures—not indeed as to the nature of the prediction, for that was too apparent, but as to the manner in which it was possible for an honest boy like Morris to be brought to so nefarious an end; while others treating the matter more lightly, bandied jokes back and forward, touching the large produce of hemp for the year, the skill of certain persons in curious slip knots, or the expertness of their performances on great public occasions. No one distinguished himself more for the brilliancy of his wit in the affair, than a little hump-backed shoemaker, known by the name of Will Wiley, a sort of rustic Sir Malachie Malgroomer, whose happiest moments seem to grow out of the miseries of his neighbor.

After all the most obvious points of annoyance to poor Morris were worn out, the humpback observed in a consoling tone, "that the old ooman sure as she always was, might be out in her reckoning for once, and that even if she was right, the unlucky day might perhaps come late in life, and give him a longer run than many who died in their beds. 'Twas a shame to be down on the boy that way, sure all must die, young and old, handsome and contrary." The only question that was of real consequence to Morris, was the time it was to happen, for, "naturally enough," no one likes to be cut off in the bloom of his days." It may be imagined the effect such consoling observations had on the mind of a simple, timid, superstitious lad like Morris. He summoned up sufficient resolution at first, to join in the general merriment, pretending to regard the affair as mere pastime, but he soon grew fidgety, his humour appeared constrained and unnatural, and at length assumed so piteous an expression, that it became quite ludicrous. Unable any longer to sustain his expiring spirits, his countenance fell, and with a pale cheek and compressed lip, he shrunk back into the corner, opposite to the fortune-teller, the devoted and unresisting victim of the party.

There was but one person of all present, who took no part in this unmerciful persecution—a near neighbour of Morris, named Peter Nocten. He was much about his own age, sat upon the same form with him in school, and was his constant playfellow out of it. Possessed of more acuteness, and much less timidity of character than Morris, he felt the greatest indignation at the cruel bantering directed against his friend, and had much difficulty in restraining himself from openly declaring his feelings on the subject. His reserved manner did not escape the notice of his companions, who, looking upon it as a tacit condemnation of their proceedings, resolved by common accord to make him their next victim. The future destiny of Peter was therefore instantly demanded of the fortune-teller, and the more strenuous his objections to tempt an inquiry which had proved so distressing to his friend Morris, the more resolved did they appear to over-rule them. Old Vauria, ever since the conclusion of her terrific prediction, was occupied apparently in watching the flickering light of the burning bogwood on the hearthstone, with an expression of quiet satisfaction. She now, however, looked up as if to learn who next was about to make inquiry of coming events, and though unable to hear a single word that was uttered by the parties, evidently comprehended the general bearing of the discussion, and the relative situation of the two friends and their tormentors. Peter's silence, his resentful expression of countenance, and utter disrelish of her art had not escaped her, and it was with a look of vindictive pleasure she now saw him dragged forward by the boisterous merry makers before the full light of the fire, that she might more faithfully read the lines which destiny had drawn in his angry countenance. After scrutinizing his features for a considerable time, with the same fixed looks which she assumed in examining Morris Moran's, she again smoothed the ashes on the hearth, and commenced a second sketch. The interest was now more intense than before; the stooping faces met in a condensed crescent over the dummy's shoulder, and when the drawing was sufficiently advanced to admit of a conjecture as to the intention, a universal cry burst from among them. There was the gallows again, but in addition to it, close at its foot, was distinctly described a coffin with the letters P. N., on the lid. Peter, notwithstanding his natural strength of mind and his mistrust of all such pretensions to foreknowledge, was a little startled at the result, but speedily recovering his confidence, resolutely declared, "that he didn't care a rush who any old hag like her and dray that knew no more than himself what was to happen in the world, and that, if she met what she deserved, she'd be shut up in the jail be the magistrates for her lies and mischief making." There was a general exclamation against the disbelief of the mysterious gift of fortune-telling and the contempt so unhesitatingly expressed of the unconscious dummy. Sundry stories were related of the fulfilment of many of her former extraordinary predictions, which seemed at the time as improbable as those now given, and such irresistible evidence was the finally accumulated that none but the most hardened infidel could longer entertain a doubt on the subject. The certainty of the dummy's prescience being thus satisfactorily settled, the interest of the discussion naturally turned upon the interpretation which should be given of the two designs. They differed only in the circumstance of a coffin having been represented at the gallows foot, in the sketch referring to the fate of Peter Nocten. The general opinion appeared to be, that the gallows in the first sketch only indicated imminent danger of death by suspension for Morris; but, as there was no coffin, that he would finally escape, while the second design clearly intimated that the party would not only be brought to the gallows, but would actually suffer there. Morris, forgetful of the fate to which this explanation doomed the unfortunate Peter, felt for a while as if a heavy load was taken off his heart. The relief, however, proved a short continuance, for the cobbler, who had been attentively listening to the various interpretations proposed, de-

clared his assent from them all; and looking at Morris in a melancholy manner, observed, "that it went to his heart to say it, but what they were thinking of wasn't at all the meaning of the pictures the old ooman had drawn in the ashes—he wished to heaven it was—but there was no going again the will o' Providence, and it was our duty to submit to whatever lot is ordered for us, be it good or evil. What does it signify, after all," continued he, "whether a man gets Christian burial or no, when once the breath is out of the body?"

"Oh! murther, alive! Will," exclaimed another humorist, who fully comprehended what the humpback was driving at, and was desirous of impressing it more fully on Morris' mind, "you don't make that atyther of the poor boys won't get buried in holy ground alongside their ancestors, or what is it you understand be it."

"I'll tell you then," returned Will, "and 'tis the real meaning, and nothing else; for I'd be loth to have Morris desavied about what it is of such consequence to him to know. When we don't know our end, God help us, and what we're to suffer, 'tis thinken more of the doens of this world we are, then of how we're to take our lave of it. But, as I said, I'll tell you the meaning of it. The two gallowses signify that they'll both be hanged—the Lord beatus us and harm! Morris I main, and Pethes. The coffin at the foot o' the gallows in the drawing for Pether is a sign, and atther he's cut down, his body 'll be given to his friends to be buried naturally, like any Christian. But there being no coffin in the drawing for Morris, be-tokens that his corpse 'll be kept over by the sheriffs for the surgeons to dissect it."

This interpretation was received with a cry of horror, and the eyes of the whole party were instinctively turned upon the devoted Morris, who waxed paler and paler in the flicker of the firelight, until his motionless features and palsied stare looked so ghastly, that some of the tender hearted of those about him became alarmed, and repented of the extreme to which they had carried their persecution. The impression the discussion had made on Peter's mind did not so readily appear. His features were perhaps paler than natural, but they underwent no other alteration, whether from a natural firmness of mind, or the momentary resolution arising from a desire to disappoint his tormentors. As soon, however, as he found himself becoming an object of such unenviable interest, he started up and flung himself from the circle round the fire with much indignation. In the precipitancy of the movement, his foot coming upon the paw of a terrier dog, who lay snoring behind him, the irritated animal, in the anguish of the moment, seized him by the calf of the leg, and inflicted a deep wound. Peter's involuntary cry startled every one, and, on learning the injury he had suffered, much real sympathy was excited, and the tide of all nature, which had been setting against him the whole evening, now flowed in his favor full of kindness and interest. Even the malicious humpback seemed melted to some show of humanity when he beheld the streams of blood running down Peter's leg and his features fixed and contracted with the pain. Several assisted anxiously in dressing the wound, but although the suffering was soon allayed and the leg bandaged up, there seemed to be no disposition to renew the amusements of the night; guest after guest rapidly took leave and Peter at last, leaning upon his friend Morris, proceeded for his own home.

For several months after this ill-omened evening, Morris was haunted by the dummy's predictions, which the interpretation of the humpback had made so much more horrible. It was long, very long before he recovered his former tranquillity of mind, or enjoyed in his rustic avocations the cheerful and contented spirit which had blessed him from his cradle. Even in an after period of life, when the recollections under which he had long drooped, were banished by new and fearful times commenced, the events of which were but too well calculated to revive his apprehensions.

Every one yet remembers the disturbances in the county of Clare, and their origin. A combination of circumstances—the want of employment—the low rate of wages—the difficulty of obtaining potato ground since pasture lands became so profitable—the dispossession of the cottier tenantry throughout large tracts of country—and the high price of provisions consequent on the deficient harvest of the past year—all tended to drive the destitute multitudes into that utter recklessness of consequences, which made them ready and eager for the most desperate alternative. Bound together by common suffering, and confident in their numbers, it naturally occurred to them, that by adopting a systematic plan of operation, they might accomplish the redress of their grievances themselves. By enforcing a few simple regulations on a community who were very indifferent to their distribution, it seemed clear that they could improve their unhappy state, and restore matters to a more just and natural condition. A rate of rent was accordingly fixed upon for potato ground, beyond which no man dare accept a farthing—a price was determined for potatoes—a price for labor, and no man was to be dispossessed of his farm for any cause but the non-payment of rent. It was also resolved that no one should pasture more than a certain proportion of his own land, and that any

infringement of the regulation should be visited on the offender by a general levelling of the fences, and converting his whole demesne into a commonage. For all other breaches of these new rules, the sentence of death was to be inflicted without mercy. For the purpose of securing a more perfect observance of them, they obtained arms and ammunition by storming the houses of the gentry, and afterwards marched in armed bands, by night from place to place to issue new orders or to inflict summary punishment on delinquents. When this state of things had continued for some time, and it was no longer safe to travel to fair or market by day, or lie in one's bed by night, the attention of government was aroused, a large number of the military were poured into the county, the insurrection act was put into force, and the most remote districts were constantly patrolled by parties of horsemen or mounted police. Persons caught out of door after sunset, or who were taken with arms or ammunition in their hands, or concealed in their houses, or against whom there was any direct information, were instantly seized, tried by a Special Commission of Ennis, and sent off to Cork for transportation. The cabins of the country people were also visited at night by the patrols, and the muster rolls of the several families which they were compelled to have pasted over their doors being called over, such as were missing became liable to the same punishment. Those severe measures, so far from terrifying the insurgents or restoring peace to the country, seemed at first to aggravate the mischief. Night after night houses were attacked and the inmates flogged or murdered, straggling soldiers or lone post boys were found dead on the highways, protestors were discovered in dikes or quarries, with their skulls somewhat unceremoniously trepanned, or witnesses floating about in some of the wild lakes for which the country is so remarkable, with bladders fastened to their ankles and their feet over water.

It may be well conceived what a change came over the spirit of the poor peaceable Morris in such perilous times. There was no neutral ground between the two contending parties, (the authorities and the people,) whereon he might set his tent and lie down in safety, or rather any show of occupying a neutral position made him suspected of both. His lukewarmness as a loyalist, exposed him to the direct accusation of the magistrate, and his refusal to take the Terry Alt oaths, led to the prospect of certain death by the hands of his comrades, on any night they could spare from more important assassinations. If his harmless and innocent mode of life was even so apparent as to protect him from those dangers, he was liable to daily and unanswerable accusations at the whim or malice of any corrupt creature to whom he had ever given offence, or who sought government patronage by evincing extraordinary zeal in bringing criminals to justice. It was merely necessary to drop a rusty old pistol in some corner of his cabin, or to conceal a few ounces of gunpowder in the thatch, and give immediate information to the police of the fact, that such articles were in his possession, to consign him at any moment to the fatal tree. Circumstances such as these were not likely to give rise to reflections upon which even the most courageous persons could grow complacent. It is little wonder therefore, that upon the timid Morris they should have a very contrary effect. His eyes grew wandering and suspicious—his cheek became shrunk and wan, and his limbs wasted day after day, until he almost presented a double of that celebrated specimen of a living anatomy, Claude Seurat. He was sometimes to be seen for hours sitting on a little stone bench at his cabin door, with his elbows on his knees, his temples resting between his hands, and his dilated eyes staring vacantly on the road before him—at others, wandering about near his residence, pale and dejected, starting at the appearance of a traveller, or glancing listlessly to the hills on either side, as if in resigned anticipation of some danger from which there was no possible hope of escape—or again, at night, huddled up in the chimney corner, poring intently over the dying embers, or listening with excited eye and palpitating heart whenever the faintest sound of footsteps fell upon his ear. In these awful times it might be imagined that the disposition of even the stony-hearted cobbler would become mollified, and partaking himself of the general apprehension of danger, that he would have evinced some touch of sympathy for the sufferings of others. But strange to tell, in proportions as perils multiplied, and frequent murders and executions harrowed the hearts of all classes of the community, the spirit of the humpback appeared to arise, and he walked the country amidst fire and bloodshed with a buoyant and elated step, as if no possible harm could befall him. Whenever he chanced to meet with the unhappy Morris, he gazed upon his emaciated figure with a look, not of compassion, nor on the other hand of delight, but as if amused at the extraordinary, and as it seemed to him, comical change which fear could produce on poor humanity. It was some feeling of this nature perhaps, which in the worst circumstances tempted him to experiment a little further upon so susceptible an organization as Morris', and never did he possess more tantalizingly on the hopes and fears of a devoted mouse, than did this cruel deformity with his helpless victim. Sometimes as-

suming a gloomy and woe-stricken look, he sympathized with him on the terrors of the times, and the utter inability of contending against them. He would then, as if struck with a sudden recollection, ask him "did he remember the dumb fortune teller long ago, and the picture she drew?" On other occasions he would carelessly inquire for several of Morris' friends or acquaintances, who he knew had been hanged or transported a few days before, and started with well affected horror when informed of their fate. But it was especially in those seasons of lonely meditation, when every one else was abed, and the deep silence and darkness of night was around Morris, that the cobbler took peculiar delight in persecuting him. It was strongly rumored through the country that the latter had turned informer, and true or false, when once it got abroad, he had sense enough to recollect the old proverb, "give a dog a bad name, etc.," and at once placed himself under the protection of the authorities. A more useful person, in every way, could not have fallen into their hands, and as his value was well known, he was received with great favor. In a short time after he was to be seen accompanying the police in all their expeditions, and very generally acted as their interpreter at night, in visiting the cabins of the peasantry to call over the muster call. It was the humpback's delight on these excursions, to knock at Morris Moran's door, as if to ascertain whether he kept within, but in reality to enjoy his terror at the appearance of a large party of military about his house in the dead of the night. "He used to come to my cabin, sir, the villan," was Morris' expression long afterwards, when giving a detail of these visits, "with his thundering knock, just as if I was the biggest rebel in all Ireland. 'Morris,' he'd roar out—'come forward, Morris, and answer to the king, sir, questins as I'll be axed of you.' 'I'm here, gentlemen, at your service,' I'd cry, not pretending to know who was speaking to me. 'Is it Morris Moran, himself, that's making answer,' the old humpback 'ud cry again. 'The very same,' I'd say, replyen, 'sure you can come in and see.' 'That's an honest man, Morris,' the vagabond would say in return, 'there's no occasion to open the door, sence you're at home where you ought to be,' upon which they'd march off with themselves to frighten the life out of some other poor soul."

It was in the midst of this distress, said my kind host, in continuation of his interesting narrative, that I happened to encounter poor Morris, and struck with compassion by his worn frame and dejected countenance, offered him an asylum at Kilgobbin. The man fell into ecstasies of the proposal, and before the sun went down upon his happiness, transferred himself and such personal effects as were of any value to him to the house you now find him in. On that never forgotten night, the first tranquil sleep he had enjoyed for months visited his weary eyes, and he awoke on the following morning like one who had been transported in his slumbers, to some happy land, where joy and sunshine had eternal reign. Though ignorant and awkward, he got through such duties as were assigned to him in the family with grateful earnestness, and untold as he was, I cannot say I had ever the least reason to repent of any kindness I had shown him.

An event came to pass about this time which showed how uncertain are all human hopes, and how idle to go for hind and helpless mortals to struggle against their destinies. The agrarian conspiracy had become so universal in Clare, that notwithstanding the almost daily murders and burglaries committed in various parts of the country, the levelling of boundaries and fences, and the upturning of pasture lands, scarcely an individual could be induced to give information against the offenders. The magistrates therefore had no alternative, but that of keeping patrolling parties on foot in every district, on the chance of their coming into contact with the insurgents. On some special duty of this nature, and with a view of making arrests of suspicious persons, a party consisting of eight privates of the 5th Regiment of foot, commanded by Sergeant Robinson, and seven policemen, commanded by Sergeant Woods; left Ennis, about 10 o'clock, on a fine night in the beginning of May. They were all dressed in coloured clothes, that no suspicion might be entertained of their object. Taking the road to Kilrush, and travelling all night, they arrived about 6 o'clock in the morning at the little village of Ballinacilly, in this very neighborhood of Kilgobbin, where Morris Moran had as he hoped found such secure protection. After having breakfasted at the inn, the party moved on by a mountain road by the right, and crossing to the new line of road from Ennis to Kilrush, arrived about 8 o'clock at a well-known house of entertainment kept by a woman of the name of Fanny O'Dea. During the latter part of this journey, their movements seemed to have attracted some attention. Several men along the road were observed to leave their work, and loiter in their rear, meeting and talking to one another, with great apparent interest. On leaving O'Dea's house, a man fell in with them upon the road, who, after some conversation, the sergeant of police thought might be of much service in giving useful information, if they could only get him on to the next police station. He therefore made

signs to his men to keep him along side them, but if possible without letting it appear he was under any restraint. His object, however, there was reason to believe, was soon observed, for the crowd behind gradually increased to an alarming amount, and pressed every moment more closely upon them. Soon afterwards bodies of men armed with swords, scythes and guns, were seen descending in all directions from the adjacent hills, and closing on their line of march, those nearest demanding with loud shouts of intimidation the liberation of the prisoner. The police sergeant, apprehensive of any collision with so formidable a body, immediately desired the countryman to whom he referred, to retire and rejoin his friends. He at the same moment, directed his little party to draw their pistols from their breasts, and entreated the people to keep back, declaring that if any closer advance was made, he should order his men to fire upon them. The menace was answered by loud shouts of defiance, and it now became obvious to the leaders of the little band, that unless they could speedily effect a retreat upon a building, where they could better defend themselves from such numbers, their destruction was inevitable. Looking around the country, the nearest respectable house within view, was at Clondegad, a distance of three miles, and to this point they directed a retreat, taking their places in the rear of their men, and returning step by step with their faces to the assailants. A discharge of fire-arms mixed with volleys of stones from the latter, at length commenced the anticipated attack, upon which the fire was briskly returned by the police and military. Two of the country people fell at the first discharge, which occasioned some little confusion and delayed their rapid advance, so that the soldiery, though several were badly wounded, were enabled to continue their retreat. A running fight was maintained in this way an hour before they reached the boundaries of Clondegad, where their progress was impeded by a deep ravine, through which a rivulet pursued its course. Sergeant Robinson, who commanded the regulars, though wounded and fatigued, now halted, and gallantly endeavored to maintain his ground in the rear of his men, while they were escaping down the steep banks into the bed of the stream, crossing which they were on the lawn of Clondegad, within whose walls a more efficient defence might be made. The poor sergeant, however, was not fated to reach the place of safety which his bravery contributed so much to secure to his men. As the last of the party was descending into the bed of the stream, he observed him staggering on the pathway in the grove above, and making desperate efforts against two of his armed assailants who were pressing furiously on him. In a few minutes after he disappeared from his view, and when the combat was over and the crowd finally dispersed, his body was found in the plantation covered with wounds.

Such a fierce conflict as this with a body of military in the open day, had not occurred in Clare since the commencement of the disturbances; and it consequently created an unusual sensation throughout the neighborhood. A servant man belonging to Captain O'Kelly, of Ballinvoher, was riding home at the time from Ballinacilly, with a basket of bread on his arm, on reaching the brow of the hill, he came in full view of the engagement, which so excited him, that he galloped back to the village, and called out to the people to come out and see the murther, that was going on towards Clondegad. Numbers rushed out at the summons, and among the rest, the wife of one of the policemen, who were engaged in the fray. Anxious for her husband's safety, she descended the hill, with many other women perhaps equally interested for some of the insurgents and, spiritedly making her way through the dense crowd, reached Clondegad, just as Sergeant Robinson had fallen. This woman's evidence, subsequently, in identifying the murderers, was turned to good account by the magistracy.

Some few days after this occurrence, a loud knocking was heard about midnight, at the gate of Kilgobbin. Morris had just fallen into his first sleep, and was dreaming of some new and curious instrument for executing criminals without manual assistance, invented by an ingenious hangman who was at the time becoming very infirm. He thought he was witnessing the first trial of the machine, and distinctly saw a poor, pained wretch, standing on a platform, awaiting his execution. When the signal was given, the inventors touched a spring, upon which the platform opened and allowing the culprit to fall through, closed again as suddenly, so as to intercept his descent, just at once clobbered through the head springing about upon the scaffolding, while the corpse had disappeared. It was precisely at this moment of horror, that the loud knocking at the door became perceptible to his senses. He rubbed his eyes, elevated himself on his elbow in the bed, and listened with increasing terror, as the knocking became more astounding. At length, gathering sufficient courage to wrap his clothes about him, he hastily descended to the hall, from whence all the disturbance proceeded.

"Who's there?" ejaculated Morris, in a tremulous tone, putting his mouth to the keyhole, and feeling at