

SALLY CAVANAGH,

Or, The Untenanted Graves.

A TALE OF TIPPERARY.

BY CHARLES J. KICKHAM.

CHAPTER XVI.—Continued.

"Take a taste av this, an' it will warm your heart."

Shawn Gow sat up and took the bottle in his hand.

"Nancy," he says, "I believe afther all you're fond of me."

"Wisha, Shawn, achora, what else 'd I be but fond av you?"

"I thought, Nancy, you couldn't care for one that thrated you so bad."

"Och, Shawn, Shawn, don't talk that way to me. Sure I thought my heart was broken when I see you stretched there widout a stir in you."

"An' you left your shawl in pledge agin to get this for me?"

"To be sure I did; an' a good right I had; an' sorry I'd be to see you in the want av a drop o' nourishment."

"I was a baste, Nancy. But if I was, this is what made a baste av me."

And Shawn Gow fixed his eyes upon the bottle with a look in which hatred and fascination were strangely blended. He turned quickly to his wife.

"Will you give in it was a blackbird?" he asked.

"A blackbird," she repeated, irresolutely.

"Yes, a blackbird. Will you give in it was a blackbird?" Shawn Gow was evidently relapsing into his savage mood.

"Well," said his wife, after some hesitation, "'twas a blackbird. Will that please you?"

"An' you 'll never say 'twas a thrush agin?"

"Never. An' sure on'y for the speckles on the breast, I'd never say 'twas a thrush. But sure you ought to know better than me—an'—an' 'twas a blackbird," she exclaimed, with a desperate effort.

Shawn Gow swung the bottle round his head and flung it with all his strength against the hob. The whole fire-place was for a moment one blaze of light.

"The devil was in id," says the smith, smiling grimly; "an' there he's off in a flash of fire. I'm done wid him, any way."

"Well, I wish you a happy Christmas, Nancy," said Sally.

"I wish you the same, Sally, an' a great many of 'em. I suppose you're goin' to first Mass? Shawn and me'll wait for second."

Sally took her leave of this remarkable couple, and proceeded on her way to the village. She met Tim Croak and his wife, Betty, who were also going to first Mass. After the usual interchange of greetings, Betty surveyed Sally from head to foot with a look of delighted wonder.

"Look at her, Tim," she exclaimed, "an' isn't she as young an' as hearty as ever? Bad cess to me, but you're the same Sally that danced wud the master at my weedin', next Thursday fortnight 'll be eleven years."

"Begob, you're a great woman," says Tim.

The allusion to "the master" was not pleasant to Sally Cavanagh, and to avoid further reference to the disagreeable subject, she described the scene she had witnessed at the blacksmith's.

"But, Tim," said she, after finishing the story, "how did the dispute about the blackbird come first? I heard something about it, but I forget it."

"I'll tell you that, then, said Tim. "Begob aye," he exclaimed abruptly, after thinking for a moment, "'twas this day seven years, for all the world,—the year o' the hard frost. Shawn Gow set a crib in his haggert the evenin' afore; an' when he went out in the mornin' he had a hen blackbird. He put the goulouge on her nick, an' tuck her in his hand; an' wud one smullock av his finger, knocked the life out av her; he walked in an' threw the blackbird on the table."

"Oh Shawn," said Nancy, "you're after ketchin' a fine thrish." Nancy took the bird in her hand an' began rubbin' the feathers on her breast. "A fine thrish," said Nancy.

"'Tisn't a thrish, but a blackbird," said Shawn.

"Wisha, in troth, Shawn," said Nancy, "is a thrish; do you want to take the sight o' my eyes from me?"

"I tell you 'tis a blackbird," said he.

"Indeed then it isn't, but a thrish," says she.

"Any way, one word borrowed another; and the end av it was, Shawn failed at her an' gev her the father av a batin'."

"The Christmas day afther, Nancy opened the door an' looked out."

"God be wud this day twelve months," said she, "do you remimber the fine thrish you caught in the crib?"

"'Twas a blackbird," said Shawn.

"Whist now, Shawn, 'twas a thrish," said Nancy.

"I tell you again 'twas a blackbird," said Shawn.

"Och," said Nancy, beginning to laugh, "that was the quare blackbird. Wud that, one word borrowed another, an' Shawn stood up an' gev her the father av a batin'. The third Christmas day kem, and they wor in the best o' good humor after the tay, and Shawn puttin' on his ridin' coat to go to Mass. "Well, Shawn," said Nancy, "I'm thinkin' av what an unhappy Christmas mornin' we had this day twelve months, all on account of that thrish you caught in the crib, bad cess to her."

"'Twas a blackbird," said Shawn.

"Wisha, good luck to you, an' don't be talkin' foolish," said Nancy; "an' you're betterth not get into a passion agin, an' account av an ould thrish. My heavy curse on the same thrish," said Nancy.

"I tell you 'twas a blackbird," said Shawn.

"An' I tell you 'twas a thrish," said Nancy.

"Wud that, Shawn took down a bunnaun he had seasonin' in the chimley, an' whaled at Nancy, and gev her the father av a batin'."

"An' every Christmas mornin', from that day to this, 'twas the same story, for as sure as the sun Nancy 'd draw down the thrish."

"But do you tell me, Sally, she's after givin' in it was a blackbird?"

"She is," replied Sally.

"Begob," said Tim Croak, after a minute's serious reflection, "it ought to be put in the papers. I never h'ard afore av a wrong notion bein' got out av a woman's head. But Shawn Gow is no joke to dale wud, and it took him seven years to do id."

Matt Hazlitt was standing at his garden gate as they passed.

"Did you hear the news?" Tim inquired.

"No, what is it?"

"The mashter is after purchasin' the property."

"I'm sorry to hear it," Matt Hazlitt observee gravely.

"He went off to Dublin the mornin' after the hunt," Tim continued, "and made the bargain. He says he gev thirty years' purchase for id."

"'Tis a bad job for old Mr. Purcell, I'm afear'd," said Matt.

"I don't say he'll do more than rise the rint," said Tim. "He's not half as bad as his name."

But Matt, remembering the altercation between the landlord and Brian Purcell, shook his head.

Sally Cavanagh went quietly into the house and was warmly greeted by Mrs. Hazlitt, who kicked Button from the hearth, and placed a chair for her visitor. Sally whispered something to her, and Mrs. Hazlitt immediately ran to the door and called her husband.

"Matt," says she, "isn't this an elegant blue cloth cloak Sally has?"

"'Tis a nice cloak, sure enough," says Matt.

"Twelve and sixpence a yard, an' the same as new. Never wore it five times," continues Mrs. Hazlitt, taking hold of the cloak and rubbing it with the grain. "'Tis as fine as silk." Mrs. Hazlitt whispered some word into her husband's ear, which made him fix his eyes thoughtfully on Sally Cavanagh's.

He walked with a grave look into his bedroom, and returning, slipped something into his wife's hand, which something she slipped into Sally Cavanagh's hand. Sally stood up, just as if nothing unusual had happened, and walked out quickly. After passing the gate she slackened her pace in order not to come up too soon with Tim Croak and his wife. For in spite of her efforts to repress them, the tears gushed from eyes. Tim Croak and his wife stopped to wait for her; and the turkey-red handkerchief, which she had held ostentatiously in her hand, was thrust hastily into her pocket. They might notice that it was wet. Sally Cavanagh was as hearty as ever till she reached the village. The first bell was ringing, and Sally and Mrs. Croak hurried into the chapel. Tim usually waited till the tinkling of the "little bell" an-

nounced that priest "was on the altar," and so he remained outside in the yard, to listen to Josh Reddy and Jack Meehan, the tailor, discussing the interesting question, whether weddings were likely to be numerous during the approaching Shrovetide. Jack Meehan, who had already been measuring some "clever young fellows" for "new shoots," shrewdly conjectured that Father O'Gorman "would not have to sell his horse, any way."

"No fear av that, I'm thinkin'," observed Tim Croak, looking towards the table at the gate, upon which Mr. Purcell was just after placing a pound note. There were two large dishes upon the table; one already heaped up with coppers while the bottom of the other was covered with a layer of silver. This, we need scarcely observe, was the parish priest's "Christmas collection." Josh raised the unique white hat in acknowledgment of Kate Purcell's bow, and remarked when she had passed:—

"That's thirty pounds, sure money, for Father Paul."

"They tell me," said Tim Croak, "that she's to be a nun. But they'll all be nuns,—till the man 'll come."

"Nothing disrespectful of that young lady in my presence, if you please," observed Josh Reddy with quite a chivalrous air.

"I wonder what young Brian is thinkin' of," said Jack Meehan. "Faith it 'd be time for him to stir himself."

"I think I could tell you that same," replied Tim Croak. "Begob 'tis an admiration to see the way they're all settin' wan another astray."

"Setting one another astray," said Josh Reddy. "Be good enough to elucidate your meaning."

"What?" says Tim. "The duce a wan o' me knows what you're sayin'."

"You are just after observing that the people are setting one another astray. What do you mean by that?"

"I'll tell you then. The girl that her mother afore her on'y wanted an industrious man that 'd mind his business, nothing less 'll do her than a young gag wud a silk hankecher on dher his nick an' a jauntin' car; an' the man that 'll have the silk hankecher on dher his nick an' the jauntin' car, och! the duce a less 'll plase him than wan wud a feather in ner hat an' a payanna; an' she 'll be lookin' for a jintleman, or may be a counselor, or a captain in the army. An' that's the way they're settin' wan another astray."

"Pon me veracity, Tim," observed Josh Reddy, "there's a profundity of truth in what you say. But I don't see why Mr. Brian Purcell should not aspire to the hand of a lady with a feather in her hat, and whose musical talents have been cultivated."

"Be me sowl, then," said Tim, "I know a hat that he's the highest feather in, or I'm mistaken. An' that wouldn't be pleasant news to some captains in the army. But there's the little bell."

Tim Croak and Jack Meehan went into the aisle of the chapel, while Josh Reddy ascended the gallery, where he had "the choir" all to himself. Father O'Gorman had been obliged to give up his choir in despair, for no sooner would Josh have a number of young men and women duly instructed for the purpose, than the ruin of their parents would compel them to fly in search of a livelihood far away from Father O'Gorman's little chapel. And so Josh Reddy knelt in solitary dignity within the curtained space in the corner of the gallery.

After second Mass, Sally Cavanagh called in on some pretext or other to almost every house in the village, and made it a point to wish as many as possible of her acquaintances the compliments of the season. She bought five penny loaves at Mrs. Casey's, and rather surprised that good woman by handing her a pound note in payment. Mrs. Casey was obliged to go upstairs to her box for the change, and the rumor spread about that Sally Cavanagh was after getting money from America; and "would you doubt Connor?" and "wasn't it short he was earnin' it?" and similar remarks were heard on every side.

It was after three o'clock when she reached home. The children came running down the breen to meet her, except Norah, who stood smiling at the door with the infant in her arms, her long yellow hair shining like gold in the setting sun.

Sally Cavanagh folded her cloak carefully.

"Corney," said she, "I'm goin' to

give the lend of my new cloak to Mrs. Hazlitt, an' you must run over with it to her."

Corney was delighted, and mentally resolved to return by the crab ditch, where he had no doubt of finding the full of his cap of golden crabs among the long grass.

"Go the short cut, Corney," said his mother; "but come home around the road, as it might be dark on you before you could cross the river."

Corney reached the cottage a little after sunset, and delivered his bundle to Mrs. Hazlitt.

"He's the moral of his father, Matt," Mrs. Hazlitt observed.

Corney was making off for the crab ditch, when Matt suggested the propriety of giving the little boy something to eat, and before he had time to say "yes" or "no," Corney found himself sitting at the table with a plate of cold beef and a loaf of bread before him. Corney commenced operations so shyly that Mrs. Hazlitt beckoned to her husband, and both left the kitchen. When they returned the beef and bread were invisible, and Mrs. Hazlitt, clapping Corney on the back, desired him to hurry home as fast as his legs could carry him, as the night would be pitch dark.

"Did ye get any crabs for us, Corney?" exclaimed Tommy and Nickey, the moment he made his appearance.

"No," says Corney, panting after his race home; "but I have something better for ye." And thrusting his hand inside his jacket, the boy produced the meat which Mrs. Hazlitt had given him credit for demolishing so quickly.

(To be continued.)

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