

The Seal

By KATHARINE TYNAN
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It was a week after Mairo Terence Lally's wife had died, at the birth of her fourth child, that the seal was flung up out of the storm on the sand-strewn slope before Terence Lally's cottage door. Lonely, lonely in Dorracran, where they laid Mairo to rest, with its three tall cypresses blown slanting by the sea-wind, and the one gobble of its ruined abbey standing shoulder-high among the long grasses, grey with sea-sand and whitened with the bones of the dead. Mairo had ever been timid and feared of them that walk between the duck and the dawn. It was hard that she must come to lie in the place that had always been most foreboding to her, and to lie there under the earth with the dead bones for company while the feet of the living tramped away to warm firesides and talk and laughter.

Terence Lally was for flinging the seal back in the sea at first, but as he stood looking at it, all wet and shivering, it lifted its great piteous brown eyes to him with a more than human appeal. Terence started and turned pale.

"The creature has the eyes of Mairo when I was angry," he said, as he crossed himself and turned away. The seal dragged itself over the threshold, and none forbade it. It came to the chimney corner where the cradle was, and cropt into the warm shadows. One or another of the neighbors came in to see the strange beast.

"'Twill abide with you," said one, "for 'tis easy to see the creature is young, and not used to its own element."

And another—
" 'Tis a terrible lucky thing entirely to happen to you, Terence Lally. I wish it was by my door it had come insinuating itself, Lashins and lavins' of gold it 'd bring in its train, an' you mark my words."

Mairo Brennan, who said this, was a wise woman, and her words weighed with Terence Lally, for every Lally of them that ever lived was eager after the money.

"It shall abide then," he said, "and my blessing on it," and when he had said it, the poor dumb beast, crouched by the cradle, turned a look of gratitude on him that gave him a pain in the heart. So used Mairo look at him when he gave her the soft word, and that was not often. God forgive him!

Well, whether there was anything in the wise woman's talk or not, as the time passed the greatest prosperity that ever was came to Terence Lally. His crops thrived and his sheep increased, and he took to fattening a few bullocks now and again, and to rearing an odd little horse for Caher-on-Fair. The time came that the cottage was as comfortable in gold and yellow ricks that you could hardly see it for substance, and the fields were dotted over with the little mountain sheep, with here and there a fine black or strawberry calf among them. The neighbors said that the Lallys could have meat to their dinner every day if they liked; but Terence wasn't one to like spending. It pleased him better to hoard the gold in a long stocking stuck in a hole of the thatch, and to live hard, as his father had done before him.

Terence was out mostly all day seeing to his land or his stock, or his fishing, and little Oona, ten years old, kept the house and minded the children. It was happier so, for Terence was a surly man, and not much comfort in it when he was in the house. Still, it was noticed that he never had an ill word for the seal, and the creature seemed to be as happy as a much-petted dog, sitting there in the chimney corner by its cradle, and looking lovingly out of its soft brown eyes.

Every night it returned to its own element, and sometimes in the day as well. That would be after Terence was out of the way, and when the baby was asleep. If the child happened to wake during these times it would miss the seal and begin to whimper, and presently the seal would come dragging up the field and hurrying into the house on its great wet flappers; and when the baby would hear the slooshing of it on the clay floor he would stop crying and put his thumb in his mouth and sleep again.

All the children loved the seal and the seal them, but the baby most of all; perhaps, because the first thing he took notice of was the sleek head and the kind eyes looking over the water of his basket-cradle.

In the afternoon, when little Oona had swept up the house and set a few sods of turf on the fire, that was a happy time for the children. The latter child, who was a little mother to the rest, would gather the curly heads about her and sing songs or make those stories, and the seal, you would have said, was the happiest one in that circle.

Then the time came when the baby began to walk alone, and in the long summer days, when the other children had gone off to school to the iron hut

in the valley, to find his toys and his playmates on the sandy slope before the cottage door, with its drift of seaweed and shells and gaily colored pebbles such as a child loves. There he would sit all day in the sun with no other companion than the seal, who, if anyone came by that way, would make them laugh with its serious air and clumsy gait. Oona was weighed down with the cares of housekeeping, the scrubbing and cleaning, and washing and mending. She would not have known what to do if she had had a great, wifely baby-boy on her hands as well. How could she have followed him up and down, and put by her work to be his playmate? All this the seal did for her; and the child with the seal was like a lusty child with its nurse, cooing and laughing and confiding, and as often as not bulling her.

The boy grew strong and big and would wander to the rocks and the shore, and would pursue his playmates, the waves, as they confronted him and retreated. The seal's task was no light one to turn him from the danger, and coax him to the safe places. No harm ever came to the child. The neighbors used to wonder, seeing the seal and the little lad together, at the wisdom that love had put into the heart of the poor seabeast.

And so all went well till in an hour Terence Lally took his head to marry again. It was another Mairo, but whereas the first Mairo was known as Mairo Bawn, that is the Fair, because of her milk-white skin and pale hair, this Mairo was known over the island as Mairo Rue—that is the Red.

Terence Lally was led to her by the money, as people said, she was able to put her smither on him soon enough, money or no money. She lived the other side of the island, and was an heiress in her own right. Land and stock and beasts had come to her from her father, and nothing had lost value in her hands. She had had many seeking her in marriages, but she was suspicious that they wanted her gear more than her. Yet she might well be sought for herself. She had the white skin of the red-haired, powdered with golden freckles. Her bare throat was like a pillar of snow. The great twist of her red hair she could hardly carry upon her small head, and her reddish-brown eyes had a golden fire in them. But her temper and her tongue frightened away the lads.

She was no longer young when Terence Lally sought her in marriage. He was richer than she, so that her gifts to her other suitors was out of place to him. He was still handsome and young enough; and if he, too, had temper, she thought no worse of him for that. The children, to be sure, were a drawback, but then little Oona was a useful child and would take much of that care off her hands.

Terence Lally for her sake spent some of the contents of the stocking in making the house fit to receive so handsome and well-dowered a bride. She would have the children in one end of the house and herself in another. She was not a bad hearted woman, except for her temper, and it was not to be expected of her that she should be ready to mother the dead woman's children. She was so busy with her dairy and her calf-feeding and pig rearing that she did not meddle much with the children. Oona looked to them as of old, and the step-mother was a stranger to them, which was perhaps the best thing that could have happened.

For the seal she had never any great warmth, but so long as it did not come bringing its trail of sea-water and sea-sand in her end of the house the thing did not matter. She was richer than she, so that her gifts to her other suitors was out of place to him. He was still handsome and young enough; and if he, too, had temper, she thought no worse of him for that. The children, to be sure, were a drawback, but then little Oona was a useful child and would take much of that care off her hands.

"Oh, my God!" she cried; "the children! Good in Heaven, my Owen! God! what am I to do?"

She ran to the edge of the sea distracted and up and down the sands crying to God. Unless a miracle should save them she knew they were doomed. Their father was away at a distant fair. Oona and the others were at school. There was no one to help her. Therefore she cried to God, though Mairo Rue was never good at the praying.

Suddenly an answering shriek smote upon her ear. It was something so strange, half human, half brute, in its terror and anguish, that the distracted woman stood and trembled. The boat was still churning about in the waves but no longer up and down with them. It was settling heavily with its weight of water, and though she could not see it, the two little ones, still clinging together were half buried in the sea.

But the seal, the seal! There it was bobbing up and down in the waves. She could but see its sleek black head and it was making fast to the children. She stood like one turned into stone and the prayers froze on her lips. She saw the boat sink at last, and then two little specks of white, the pinafores the children were wearing came to the top and went rising and falling in the waves with a horrible holocaust. They were till caught together for Terence had caught little Owen's pinafore and held it in a drowning clutch. She could not pray now nor scream. She felt her brain and her heart hang dead within her.

But still there was the seal. The black head reached the children and then turned and made for land. The little white pinafores followed in its trail. Mairo Rue's life came back to her as she watched the seal struggling against the outgoing tide.

After a long struggle it reached the rocks and dragged itself up. Mairo Rue was there before it, on her knees, with all her wild hair about her, hold imploring hands for what the seal brought. Little Terence clung to the seal's neck with what might be a death grip. Her baby Owen, dragged over

the rocks and the sands, he held by the pinafore. Mairo Rue flung herself down, and tore her boy from Terence's cold hand. She saw that the little face was bruised and disfigured. Flinging the other child from her she rushed to the house, and, stripping her boy, laid him before the fire. Big as she was, and as if she could warm the limbs to life. The life, never very strong in the little lad, had been washed from its resting place, and when Terence Lally came home it was to find his wife, with the face of a corpse, rocked in her arms a dead baby.

But Terence the seal had warmed with her body and brought to life, so that even as his father looked down on the dead child, the living, snatched from death, stood in the doorway. Little Owen was laid to rest, and the young grass grew over him, but the fire of his mother's anguish knew no abating. She was in rebellion against the Will, and went to them that are so. Why should Terence be left and Owen taken? All day she flung the questions against the walls of heaven, and there came back to her no answer. Her heart became disfigured. Her beautiful hair was dull and clogged, her golden skin had turned yellow, except for the two fierce fires that burned in her cheeks, and in her eyes smouldered an anger and unrest terrible to see. She looked like a woman devoured by an inward fire, and there were those who said that Mairo Rue was dying.

There had grown up in her heart a fierce anger against the seal. To Terence, indeed, she grudged the sun while her own little boy lay in the dark, but the seal she hated worse. It had saved Terence, and it had not saved Owen. If you said to her that the creature had done its best, she would answer that it had brought the ill-luck on her and here. She had always known it would be so. Didn't the world know that it had always loved Mairo Bawn's child and hated hers?

The seal, as if it knew, poor beast, kept out of the house and out of the distraught woman's way. But that was not enough. Day after day, night after night, she brooded upon it that the seal must cease to trouble her. If it could be killed, so much the better; but if it could not, it must go or she would kill it with her own hand. Perhaps in her heart she knew that the seal would rather die than be sent away, poor dumb thing that had set its love on Terence Lally's children.

The man was lost with trouble over to a change in his wife. "What is there to do for you, pulse of my heart?" he would say; "tell me, and no matter what it costs, it must be done."

And she, with the fires of madness in her eyes, and her hand pressed to her side, as though she had a mortal hurt, would answer back the dead? "Can you bring back the dead? You cannot, and that you can do, you will not do."

Terence Lally stood out for long. The seal had brought him good luck, and had saved the life of his child. But could he gove resisting the woman who had taken the heart out of his body?

The day came when, amid the screams of the children, the seal was dragged with ropes to a fishing-boat that put in below Terence Lally's house. The man stood by as white as death, his face turned from the exploring eyes of the seal, that were like the eyes of a woman, and were full of heavy tears.

"Do not hurt it," he said to the captain of the fisher fleet, that was bound for Scotland, as he counted the man into his palm. "Drop it overboard when you are a day's journey from land."

The second night after that, as the children sat lonely round the hearth-fire, there was the dragging of a heavy wet body outside the door, and when they had opened it, the seal, sorely spent, dragged herself over the threshold into the midst of them.

Terence Lally did not dare tell his wife. Since the seal had been taken away she had been kinder to him, and something of the madness had gone out of her eyes.

Early in the grey morning his boat came to the shore. Once again the seal was dragged aboard, and the boat's head turned for Westport.

There was a ship bound for America, and to her captain Terence Lally took himself. The captain held his palm for his money.

"Do not hurt it," said Terence Lally, "but when you are two days from land drop it overboard."

At last the seal saw her head so that she should not see the seal's eyes, which were like those of Mairo Bawn, and had great tears in them.

A week later, betwixt the day and the dawn, the seal dragged herself, faint and half-dying, to Terence Lally's threshold-stone.

Then he went to a wise man and asked his advice.

"The best of evil," said the wise man, "or could she have come with-out chart and compass, those miles and miles of sea? The thing to do is to put out her eyes, and then let her be carried to sea."

But Terence Lally cried that he would have nothing to do with it, and his soul was full of horror. But presently he came to the wise man, and said that the thing should be done, but he was not to know the day or the hour; and so it was done.

Many days passed, and there was no word of the seal; Mairo Rue looked almost happy, but Terence as if a heavy sickness had fallen on him. By day he wandered without ceasing, muttering to himself, and at night he would start out of his sleep sweating, and crying that he had burnt out Mairo Bawn's eyes. And the love of his wife became without comfort to him.

At last, one morning when little Oona opened the cottage door to the dancing sun, there lay the blind seal sobbing her breast. Poorly had she fought the sea and the tempest, and the rocks her blind eyes had not warned her of had torn great wounds in her breast and her side.

And even as the children came running to her with cries of love she uttered a great sob and turned on her side, and was dead.

After that neither look nor grace had Terence Lally.

His prosperity withered off him as the flesh from his bones.

All at once he was an old man, and bitter. The love between him and Mairo Rue ceased, and they sat in each end of the house with the wife of it between them for hatred.

Once more he saw the seal. It was the night, and there was Mairo Rue, and there was many a one saw, eye, and pressed close to the great black shape crouched by the threshold. But surely the seal came in forgiveness, not in anger, for a gentler woman than Mairo Bawn never walked this earth.

Her one sin was that she loved those she felt beloved better than the joys of Heaven, and that sin God had permitted her to expiate.

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An Unrehearsed Performance.

An amusing scene was recently enacted at Lillo. At the conclusion of one his performances, Sarban, the conjuror, addressed the audience as follows: "Coming to the sensational part of the programme, I now propose to decapitate one of the spectators. Any gentleman who would like to undergo the operation is invited to step on the platform."

At these words there arose a young man from Armentieres, who, in a fit of jealousy, had quarrelled with his intended, and he ran up the steps leading to the platform, firmly resolved in his despair to have his head cut off. Everything was now ready for the decapitation, and the audience sat waiting in breathless suspense, when suddenly the sweetheart of the "knight of the rueful countenance" rushed upon the stage, exclaiming:

"No, Paul! You shall not die!" whereupon she clasped her lover in her arms and dragged him with main force out of the booth.

As may be readily conceived, this pathetic scene had quite an exhilarating effect upon the spectators.

Where "Poor Jo" Was Buried.

An English exchange says that the Consistory Court held in the Wellington Chapel, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, the Chancellor of the Diocese of London applied on behalf of the rector and churchwardens of St. Mary-le-Strand for a faculty to enable them to construct a road through the disused burial ground, now a children's playground, and through some of the most striking and pathetic passages in "Black House." Here was buried the broken rake, Captain Hawdon, and here his victim, Lady Dedlock, was found dead at the iron gate, after her tragic flight from Sir Lester's house. "Poor Jo" in his last illness desired to be buried here, near his unknown friend the captain, who "was very good to me, he was."

FEVER AND AGUE AND BILIOUS DISORDERS are positively cured by the use of PARMELO'S PILLS. They not only cleanse the stomach and bowels from all bilious matter, but they open the excretory vessels, causing them to pour copious effusions from the blood into the bowels, after which the corrupted mass is thrown out by the natural passage of the body. They are used as a general family medicine with the best results.

"I wonder," said Mr. Dickhorn, as he filled his glass with the cork of an expert. "I wonder who started the custom of calling a drink of liquor 'a smile'?" "I wouldn't call that there one a smile," said the barman. "It is nothing short of a horse-laugh."

Little Bobby, aged four, is the proud possessor of a penny, which he contemplates with great interest while his mother tries to explain to him that there are four farthings in a penny. Bobby, after shaking the penny close to his ear, suddenly exclaims: "But, mamma, I can't hear them!"

Mr. Bruchel Receives Zonares.

MONTREAL, Aug. 11.—The Union Allet, composed of ex-Penitentiary Zetevary, called on Archbishop Bruchel yesterday and presented him with an address on the occasion of his consecration. Recorder de Montigny as President of the Association read the addresses, in the course of which he said: "We are but the debris of a battalion blessed by your predecessors, but as long as there remains one of us to bear the flag which was displayed beneath the walls of Rome, we will always find this banner displayed for the defence of religious authority. Our sons will uphold it when the old men have disappeared to demonstrate their devotion to the sacred cause of the Church. Our names, Monsiegnor, are engraved on the marble of the Cathedral and when the bugle sounds for the defence of principles, let us then recall those who bear those names. You will find them all at the post of duty with the device 'Aime Dieu et va ton chemin.'"

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