

"Let himself look after Danny Doolan, then," Katy retorted viciously. "For 'tis small mercy on him Tim Kerrigan will have and he recoverin'. 'Tis the bitterness of the law he will bring against him, and there's for you now, Mary Ellen Conerty."

Mary Ellen did not reply to the taunt, but something in her still look of contempt as she passed on silenced Katy for the moment. But her shot had gone home. Mary Ellen knew Danny's hot temper and that there had been bad blood for some time between him and black Tim Kerrigan, a hulking bully of a fellow who had chosen of late to persecute her with small attentions, which Danny resented hotly.

"He had best be leavin' you alone or it maybe that I'll be doin' him a mischief," he had growled on more than one occasion; and, "He'll be long sorry if he touches me," boasted Kerrigan when he heard of Danny's threats.

The next few days were anxious and sorrowful ones for Mary Ellen. Tim Kerrigan did not die—thanks to a natural thickness of skull—but when he recovered it was to announce his intention of prosecuting Danny with all rigour. The assault, he declared, had been an unprovoked one; and he found witnesses to corroborate his statement. The sentiment of the village turned against Danny and many were the unfavourable opinions of his conduct that reached Mary Ellen's ears as she passed along the street with pale face but head still held dauntlessly erect. Black Tim was a usurer in a small way, and there were few in the village to whom he had not lent money at one time or other. Now his debtors were loud in their denunciation of "the would-be assassin" and when, a week later, the newspaper published at the little county town, fifteen miles away, announced his capture, there was jubilation in Ballyheigue.

Mary Ellen heard the news with set face, and went about her work in silence, though a red spot burned in

either cheek as she listened to the comments of the villagers, and her eyes were full of a dangerous light. Once Tim Kerrigan himself, his head still swathed in bandages, met her and would have stopped and spoken but she turned upon him so fiercely that he shrank back.

She did not attend the trial when at last it came on, but the neighbours did, and took care that she should hear the result.

"'Twas the hangdog face that he carried on him," Jimmy Doyle explained to a group of listeners standing in the door of the little general shop where Mary Ellen was purchasing supplies for her household. "At first me bould hero was as pleasant lookin' as you please, listenin' to the witnesses that did be tellin' their tales, but it was soon he changed his face. 'Tis a black lie!' says he, when little Joe Mullingar witnessed how Kerrigan was sayin' never a word but takin' his drink like an honest man. 'That's no way to be talkin' to the Court,' says his Honour. 'Six months hard labour,' says he, 'an' 'tis well for you that it's not murder you're bein' tried for. I'm lettin' you off easy at that'."

"True for him," broke in Polly Hart, with a covert look at Mary Ellen's face. "'Tis no warm welcome Danny Doolan will be gettin' in Ballyheigue, and he comin' back here when his time is up."

"That is so, indeed," assented Jimmy, while the rest nodded their agreement. Mary Ellen, mindful of the eyes fixed upon her, kept an unmoved countenance and gathering her parcels together left the shop without a word or glance in their direction. Once outside, however, instead of turning homeward, she made her way down to the shore, and there, sitting behind one of the great rocks that strewed the beach, she let her tears flow unchecked as she thought of Danny — restless, open-air Danny — cooped up within stone walls, with the longing for freedom and the breath of the sea burning in his heart.