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THE WRECK OF THE DILLONS. A TALE OF TIPPERARY—FOUNDED ON FACTS. (From the Dublin University Magazine.) CHAPTER V.

Leaving the neighborhood to ring with the wondrous gossip consequent on the disappearance of Nelly Dillon, while each day confirms the belief that she has eloped with Peter Fogarty, we shall, with the reader's good leave, go back to the afternoon on which Nelly left her home, and by following her footsteps, throw a clearer light upon the mystery that envelopes her. Mortified and a good deal excited by the unusually harsh words of her father, the young girl had hastily quitted the house; for, although in general gentle and affectionate, she had naturally a quick temper and a high spirit; and being a good deal spoiled at home, it was easy to wound her feelings. Though a little wayward at times, she possessed very high principles, which never permitted her to stoop to falsehood or meanness. Her's had ever been considered the lip of truth, and it was frequently the boast of her parents, that though she had often been guilty in childhood of mischief, she had never once told a lie to excuse herself. As she grew up, the same truthfulness characterized her, and the same indulgence that surrounded her infancy was extended to her maturer years. So little accustomed to harsh treatment, it can hardly cause surprise, that the words addressed to her by her father on the evening in question, should irritate and rouse her. But her excitement soon passed off; the color was quickly restored to her cheek; and as the air blew freshly from the hills, she was not long in recovering her usual buoyancy, while walking on to meet her mother. The route she took was the one generally taken by her family, in going to or returning from Knockmayle, a town ten miles distant.

Crossing some stubble fields, she struck into one of those narrow, winding roads, flanked by thick wild hedges, so common in Tipperary, and having followed its zigzag turnings for some time, she once again got into the fields, and ascending some lonely hills, pursued her way with a light step, when suddenly a low, prolonged whistle attracted her attention, and she stopped, thinking the sound was a signal to herself. She was not mistaken, for, in a short time, a male figure hurriedly approached her, and Peter Fogarty stood soon beside her. His appearance was wilder than usual; his clothes looked disordered and bespattered with blood. Nelly thought he presented all the aspect of a guilty man.

"Good evenin', Nelly," he said hurriedly, in a low tone, as if fearful of speaking aloud. "I knew you'd be comin' along here, and I'm watching for you this hour."

"Then, indeed, Pety, you might be doin' somethin' better," replied Nelly, a little drily. "I'm goin' to lave the country shortly," continued Fogarty, "an' I must get a plain answer from you Nelly—whether you'll come wid me or no?"

The girl turned almost fiercely round upon her companion, as he uttered this sentence, and fixed her eyes undauntedly on his face, without speaking, while he went on—

"I know there isn't one belongin' to you likes me—but what do I care for that? Not a cushoge! I've money in plenty; an' if you come, Nelly, I promise you'll never want. So now you can just answer, yes or no?"

For a few minutes Nelly was silent, and then she spoke:

"Peter Fogarty, if you had all the gold in the world, and were the best man in Tipperary, I wouldn't go wid you, an' I have my father an' mother, like an ongrateful wretch. I wouldn't go for to draw tears from their eyes, nor put a thorn in their hearts, for anything in life. No, Pety! not a foot I'd go—even if I liked you ever so well."

"Even!" repeated Pety, with emphasis, "that means you don't like me at all, maybe."

"I liked you wanst, Pety," said Nelly, in a tremulous voice; "you know I did—but things are changed since that time. My people are against you; and I have given my promise to another."

"That sehamiu' bl'guard, Dinny Ryan, is it?" asked Fogarty, fiercely.

"You've no right to spake of him that way, Pety," replied Nelly, rebukingly. "Dinny niver wronged mortal yit."

"He has wronged me, Nelly, and you know it. Would I be what I am only for him?"

"What has he done to you?"

"Robbed me of all that could have made a decent boy o' me. Hasn't he come like a thief and taken your heart from me, Nelly? You loved me till he went between us. You would have married me if he hadn't been to the fore to sluther your father an' mother with his blarney."

"Never, Pety," exclaimed Nelly, emphatically. "I never would have married you. The life you lead wasn't what I could have borne. If I loved you it was a long time ago."

"D'ye forget them days when we walked on the hills?" "I wish to forget them," interrupted Nelly, as she hastily wiped a tear from her eye. "You don't forget them! You'll never forget them!" exclaimed Fogarty, vehemently, as he wildly threw his arm round her slight figure. "The God above only knows what I feel, Nelly Dillon; an' if your heart isn't made of stone, you can't but pity me!"

The young girl's eyes were bent on the ground. The struggle between duty and an affection which she had long thought subdued, caused a powerful emotion in her bosom; and so perplexed was her mind for a few moments, that she did not perceive the approach of some acquaintances, returning from Knockmayle, till they were quite close, and had accosted her with a "Good evenin', Nelly." Hastily withdrawing herself from the arm of Fogarty, she blushing returned the salutation, and her friends passed on to make their own comments on her behaviour as soon as they were out of hearing.

She and Peter were now as far as Scully gap—a hollow path between two hills—and with tremulous eagerness she entreated Fogarty to leave her.

"You don't know, Pety, what anger I got today about you, she observed, seeing that he would not quit her side. "My father, that never scarce spoke a cross word to me in his life!"

"Your father?" interrupted Fogarty; "who cares for him? If you loved me, Nelly, it's little you'd be thinkin' what Pat Dillon thought."

"Is it my father you wouldn't care for? Oh, Pety, you little know me or him. I wouldn't wish him or my mother to think ill o' me for all the riches in the kingdom!"

Nelly now stopped, and declared she wouldn't go a step further unless he left her; but Fogarty still kept by her side, and then she walked rapidly on in advance without speaking. They were soon beyond the Scully gap, ascending a succession of rugged heights, very lonely and wild, known as Cappaic hills. Some very dark thoughts took possession of Fogarty's mind; and the more determined Nelly was to avoid answering him, the more wicked and revengeful he felt. No man, poor or rich, likes to be rejected with scorn by his lady-love, and, unfortunately, Nelly's comeliness betrayed too much indignation at his persecution. They were both going on in utter silence, when the young man suddenly stopped, and laying his hand on her arm, asked in a very husky agitated voice—

"Will you come, Nelly? It's the last time I'll ask you; an' by—, if you don't—"

The sentence was unfinished; for, with the keen eye of one often on the look-out for such objects, Fogarty beheld, far distant, a body of men quickly passing in marching order over a low plain, distinguishable from the Cappaic hills. Without waiting for a reply, he dexterously drew out a large handkerchief, and, quick as lightning, passed it tightly over the face of the unsuspecting girl, who had not recovered her surprise and terror, when it was tied firmly behind her head, thus preventing her uttering a single audible word. He then seized her in spite of her frantic struggles, and bore her in a direction different from the one they had hitherto been taking. His giant strength rendering her weight the burden of a feather, he struck over the hills, plunged into solitary valleys, and again ascended wild heights, till Nelly's form lay more heavily in his arms, and her struggles to release herself, no longer incommoded him.

CHAPTER VI.

A long faint rendered the young girl insensible for some hours; and when she again came to herself she found she was alone in a strange apartment. The roof and sides were jagged and of irregular form, suggesting at once the surmise that it was a mountain cave. The small aperture serving for a door, was blocked up from without by huge stones and bramble bushes, which left very little room to admit the faint evening light. A variety of articles were strewn within; a black still, evidently superannuated, a powder flask and a couple of pistols, lay together in one end; while at another were piled materials for fuel—turf, sticks and tinder; a large pitcher of water and a gallon jar of whiskey, or poteen, stood side by side, accompanied by some half-baked wheaten bread, a bag of flour, a giddle, an iron pot, and one or two saucepans. These things were not at once distinguished by our young friend, whose eyes failed to pierce the dim light around her. The handkerchief had been hastily removed from her face to give her air, and now lay loosely around her shoulders; but on trying to rise from her reclining position, she found that her ankle had been sprained by some means, causing her much pain. Trembling and weak, she lay there in a terror amounting to agony, for a long time. No sound, save the whistling of the wind, as it arose higher, reached her; and gradually mutterings of thunder struck upon her ear. As the evening faded into night, the storm grew fiercer; flash

after flash of lightning in quick succession lit up the cave, while the crashing of mighty thunder echoed with tremendous force overhead, and the noise of a rushing mountain torrent added to the dismal sound. It was long before the fury of elements abated, but at length it died out, the gurgling of water alone remaining. Hour after hour passed, and still Nelly remained unmolested by the presence of any living thing. She dared not attempt to sleep, however; and throughout the whole night she lay there motionless, with unclosed eyes. The dawn of morning found her weak, shivering and decidedly ill, with a swollen ankle and feverish thirst. By a strong effort she crept a few paces to obtain a drink of water from the pitcher, after which she was again obliged to return to her reclining position. From the aspect of the cave and its contents, she could not doubt that it was the hiding-place of men engaged in nefarious pursuits; and had she been able to walk, she would have lost no time in endeavoring to make her escape; but, lame as she was, she could not think of attempting to move. To her surprise and relief, the lady wore on, and she was still alone. All within and without was silent and desolate. Evening came, and twilight was giving way to the darker shade of night, when the stones were hurriedly removed from the aperture, and a dim head was faintly discernible peering in, while a husky voice whispered:

"Are any o' ye here, boys? Pety Fogarty, if you're within, make off as fast as yer legs can carry ye." And then the apparition suddenly disappeared.

Rather encouraged by this circumstance, which seemed to indicate that the cave was longer deemed a safe retreat for those who had formerly sought its shelter, Nelly now gathered courage, and bethought her of binding up her ankle tightly with the handkerchief hanging round her neck. This she did, hoping to ally its pain; and having accomplished her purpose, she crept to the spot where she had seen materials for making a fire; and procuring lint and tinder, dexterously managed to light some well dried sticks, which soon crackled and blazed brightly. To these she added a turf or two; and though there was, probably, more smoke than you or I might have approved of, reader, she was by no means incommoded by it.

"If I am to be murdered," thought she, "I may as well die comfortable;" and with this idea she endeavored to infuse some warmth into her chilled frame. What Fogarty's designs might be she could not tell; but from what she knew of his character latterly, she feared he was capable of committing any crime for the sake of revenge. Weak and exhausted as she was, the heat of the fire had soon a soporific effect, and she was gradually dropping off into slumber, when a noise suddenly roused her, and a voice rang in her ear—

"Holloa; young woman, you're our prisoner."

By the light of the blazing sticks she beheld two figures in the costume of revenue police quite close to her. They had evidently been attracted to the cave by the light from within it; and a considerable force being in the neighborhood, on the look-out for a party of illicit distillers, they were not slow to take advantage of the beacon. Police, or as they are termed, "Peelers," of any description, are not particular favorites with the peasantry of Tipperary, and Nelly trembled very much as she found herself in the custody of the revenue men. In vain she endeavored to explain to them that she was there against her own will; the story was not a probable one; and seizing her by the arm rudely, they demanded where her accomplices were, informing her with a good deal of bitterness that they had a warrant for the apprehension of Fogarty and some others for the murder of their late officer, Grogan. Nelly's spirit was at length roused, and she stoutly denied all knowledge of the whereabouts of her supposed companions; but the men, who had been roused to a pitch of great ferocity by the barbarous murder of Grogan, heard the words with incredulity, and informed her they must arrest her. Matters were now beginning to look very black for Nelly, for she held it almost a greater misfortune to be in the hands of the revenue men than of Fogarty. By various threats and promises, they still endeavored to draw from her some information respecting the present hiding-place of the fellows they were searching for; but as she persisted in declaring her utter ignorance of their movements, they at length abandoned the effort. They took possession of the fire-arms in the cave, and having searched among its other contents, satisfied themselves by battering and kicking out the remains of the old still, and then regaled themselves with pretty strong draughts of poteen. Three men, fully armed, remained to guard the cave, while the rest went to make further search among the mountains. The night was now illuminated by a clear, unclouded moon, which rendered outward objects perfectly distinct. Retreating to an end of the cave, re-

moved from where the police were gathered round the fire, Nelly sat in perfect silence, inwardly praying that fate would contrive a way to release her from the presence of these beings whom she so much dreaded. As the night wore on, the men drank deeper, till their heads became confused. Shots were heard in the distance, breaking the stillness of the air, gradually growing more frequent, while a hideous noise of voices, yelling and shouting, mingled with the uproar. Suddenly the men staggered to their feet, and one of them hastening to the mouth of the cave, listened eagerly. It was evident that strife was going on not very far off. Whoops of the most savage kind, made the mountains echo, till it almost seemed as if a set of demons had been let loose, while sharper and louder, volley after volley, rent the air.

"Let us come on, Flynn," urged the man who had listened attentively to the exciting sounds; "there's fighting going on, and we oughtn't to be here."

"I'm ready, then," replied Flynn, who felt well enough inclined for a spree; and, forgetting their prisoner, they all three started forth, scarcely knowing whether they stood on their heads or their heels, but capable enough of fighting boldly.

Nelly ardently trusted that they might never come back, though we don't suppose she was sanguinary enough to hope they would be killed in the fray. She scarcely knew whether the defeat of the smugglers or the revenue men would be the more advantageous to herself. Listening to hoarse cries and shots, she sat crouching and shivering for a long while, thinking she might probably try to make her escape, even if she had to crawl step by step all the way. By degrees the noise of fighting grew more faint, as if the combatants were moving to a greater distance. At length it was only at rare intervals she heard a shot at all. She was meditating upon the prudence of now venturing from the cave at all hazards, when the sound of approaching steps struck upon her ear. A thrill of horror shot through her heart. Nearer and nearer they came—a heavy tramp, like the measured tread of two or three men walking slowly. The sounds ceased at the entrance to the cave; and with eyes nearly blind from terror, Nelly beheld, in the dim light, the uncovered head of a man thrust through the aperture, quickly followed by his shoulders and the rest of his body. Having made its entrance in this way the figure eventually lay at full length, flat upon the ground, without motion; and Nelly heard the sound of retreating footsteps outside. The moonlight streaming in, now fell faintly on the form of her silent companion, and with a cold shudder the girl became aware that she was within a few paces of a dead man. By his dress she concluded that he had been one of the smugglers, and earnestly bending down, she examined his features, but they were unknown to her. Ghostly and stiff, with eyes glazed and wide open, the corpse seemed to stare horribly at her. She retreated in fear and trembling, but found it impossible to keep her eyes off that sinister form. The dread of being alone with the dead is overpowering among some portions of the Irish peasantry; and perhaps Nelly felt more alarmed at being in such close contact with a corpse than she had yet felt since her capture by Fogarty. It was a strange fear, not connected with this world, and therefore the more terrible. With a thousand wild fancies rushing through her mind, among which ghosts, demons and other ghastly forms, bore most unpleasant parts, she made an agonizing effort to leave the cave, and creeping onwards passed the dead man as she made her exit through the aperture. It was a calm, cold night, the sky deep blue, and a broad shining moon riding high in the heavens. Dark masses of mountains surrounded her, rising high and wild above the hollow in which she stood. It was impossible for her to know the best way to turn. Chilled, terrified, and weak from want of food and sleep, she found it difficult to move a step; but assisting herself by her hands to climb a rugged ascent, she slowly crept on. At length reaching a lofty eminence, from which she descended what appeared to be a worn path winding along for a considerable distance, trusting to chance she struck into it; and moving thus slowly for a long while, had made considerable way, when a faintness overcame her, and she sunk down senseless.

CHAPTER VII.

On returning to partial consciousness, Nelly found herself lying in a bed with the clothes tightly tucked round her, and a feeling of great weariness oppressing her. Though aware that some person was sitting near her, and that the walls of a house surrounded her, there was something dreamlike in it all; and feeling unable to collect her senses clearly, she soon dropped off into a confused slumber. How long she remained in this listless state—almost as much dead as alive—she could not tell; but she had an indistinct idea that many days and nights elapsed

while she still lay there, a burthen to herself and those who watched her.

One morning she suddenly awoke up with a feeling of relief; the weight that had oppressed her so long was gone; and she was able to make a clear survey of what surrounded her. She observed an elderly woman and a young one, sitting at some distance from her, near a comfortable fire. They were conversing in subdued tones, but she could hear what they said.

"She'll either die or begin to mend about this day's end," whispered the elderly one.

"Ay, I think it's likely. The cough has come through a cold, anyhow."

"If she could only speak," will you see she came from, or who she is, a body of labor where to send?" continued the elderly woman.

Nelly now knew they were talking of her self, and rising on her elbow, she entreated them to tell her where she was, and how long she had been with them. With much kindness the approaching her, and told her it was a fortnight since the husband of the younger woman had found her lying senseless, only one morning, as he was returning from a distant part of the country, and that they had immediately got her conveyed to their house, where she had remained ever since. By her appearance they knew she was a respectable young woman, though, of course, the plight in which she had been found seemed very feeble, and she had been watched over and nursed from day to day, with the highest good-will and hospitality.

Nelly found that these people lived very far indeed from her own home; they knew nothing of the neighborhood she belonged to, their intercourse being rather with the Tipperary than the Tipperary side of the mountains. Nevertheless, they credited her story, and, in consequence, as it might have seemed to the inhabitants of any more civilized district, and granted to her conveyed towards her own part of the country, as soon as she was able to be moved. Nelly would willingly have set out at once, but her weak state rendered this sort of the question, as she had passed through a severe fever, and required time to regain even a little strength. Many more days elapsed before she was considered fit to travel; but her impatience to be gone was so great that much further delay would have only thrown her back; and, therefore, Mr. Maher, the man of the house, was at last necessitated to procure a donkey-cart, to convey her home. One gray winter morning, then, she took her place on the bundle of straw, piled for her benefit in the small cart, and taking a grateful farewell of her kind friends, set out on her journey. Bad roads rendered her progress slow and unpleasant; and it was already evening, when a thick rain falling, when she found herself near her beloved home. Not wishing a stranger should witness her meeting with her relatives, she preferred getting down from the cart before reaching the house, and pursuing the rest of the way on foot. Behold her, then, in the gathering darkness of the winter evening, thankfully approaching her parents' dwelling, though pale and weak from recent illness. She was already upon the patch of meadow before the house—already within a yard or two of the door—now her hand was upon the latch. The door had been fastened for the night, and she was obliged to knock for admittance, murmuring, as she did so, a devout—"thanks be to God!"

For a moment the summons was unanswered, but the voice of her father at length demanded who was there.

"It's me, father," Nelly came back to ye," replied the young girl, in tones tremulous from emotion.

A silence of death reigned in the house for several minutes. Then the door flew open, and the figure of her father, wrathful and furious, stood before her.

"Begone, you shameful wretch!" he exclaimed, wildly. "Disgrace never darkened your father's name till it was blackened by you!—Quit the place. Hide your face from all belonging to ye, you ungrateful girl! How dare you show yourself back here in this brazen way? It well becomes you to have that impudence, now that you've got no where else to go, since the blackguard you went off and has been tuk up for murder and robbery!"

Astonished at this reception, yet fully comprehending what the words of her father meant, Nelly endeavored to utter some explanatory sentences, but he would not listen to a word from her, and even her mother now called out sternly—

"Come in, Pat; shut the door, the air's blowin' in cold!"

In an instant after the door was banged with a force that made the hinges tremble, and the miserable girl found herself once again alone, standing out in the chill night air, with the rain pattering thickly on her. Her head became giddy, and, staggering a few paces from the house, she would have fallen to the ground, had not a friendly arm been passed round her slight