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THE HARE-HOUND AND THE WITCH.

BY JOHN BANIM.

(Concluded from our last.)

Whether or not the gentle Catherine shared the popular belief that she had been hunted for, and won by, and was doomed to become a spectre's bride, is not clearly ascertainable. True it is, that her cheek faded, that her eye grew dull, and that the smile of contented pleasure forsook her moistly red lip, now no longer red nor moist. But these changes may as well be accounted for on less supernatural grounds. Her military adorer still continued absent and silent; he who had so often vowed himself away into worldless sighs, nay, tears, under the big effort to define how much he loved her, and whose only hesitation to declare himself to her father, had always assumed the shape of a fear of being regarded as a speculating fortune hunter; when, at a glance, it could be ascertained that he was almost an unfriended adventurer, courting the hand of a wealthy heiress.

As to the good Squire Hogan, he contrived, or, perhaps, rather tried, to laugh at the whole thing; vaguely calling it a very good hoax; a "choice one, by Jove!" just to save himself the trouble of trying to unravel it; or else to hide his half-felt ignorance on the subject. Meantime he got some cause to laugh a little less than usual. Ejectments were served upon his estate, in the name of the lost son of the man whom he had succeeded in it. And Squire Hogan only strove to laugh the more; and to affect that he considered the claim as an uncommonly good attempt at a "capital hoax;" practised upon him by some unknown persons whom, on some past occasion, he must have outwitted "gloriously;" but it was a poor attempt at mirth, and he saw that Catherine, as well as himself, felt that it was.

In fact, he spent many hours alone, mourning for his beloved child, and taxing his brains to shield her from probable and verging misfortune. And a brilliant thought came into his head.

Would it not be a happy, as well as an exceedingly clever thing, to dispose of Catherine before the trial at law, grounded upon the ejectments, should commence, and while the matter was little suspected, to one or other of her ardent admirers at the club-dinner in Dublin; to, in fact, Ned O'Brien, or George Dempsey, or Mick Driscoll; or, above all, to Harry Walshe? And the wise father made the attempt, duly, four times in succession; and learned, thereby, that the serving of the ejectments was more generally known than he had imagined.

Still he tried to laugh, however; until one morning, when his boisterousness ended in sudden tears, as he cast his head on Catherine's shoulder, and said:—"Oh, Kate, Kate! what is to become of you?—I think I can bear poverty—but you?"

"My dear father, do not be cast down," answered Catherine; "I can earn money in many ways, for us both, if good people will give me employment."

"And you are going a-working to support your father, Kate?"

He left the room sobbing. His tears affected Catherine to the quick. Other sad and bitter recollections swelled her sorrow into a flood.—She could now account for the persevering neglect of her lover, and her tenderly-beloved, upon no other grounds than those of her approaching poverty. Oh, that was a heart-cutting thought.

The day upon which the poor squire must necessarily start from the country to attend the trial in Dublin arrived; and he commenced his journey with another magnificent conception in his head; to eke out which he carried in his pocket, without her knowledge, a miniature of his daughter Catherine. And with this miniature, and a note, expressive of his willingness to compromise the matter by a marriage, he called on the new claimant for his squireship, the evening of his arrival in the metropolis. But, having retired to his own town-house long before he could have thought it possible that his note had received a leisurely reading, he received back the miniature with a technical epistle from his rival's attorney, stating that no compromise could be entered into; that the heir-at-law was determined to accept nothing which the law should not decide to be his right; and adding that any attempts to see the young gentleman must prove unavailing, while they would be felt to be intrusive; inasmuch as, in cautious provision against a failure in his attempt to establish his claim, he had invariably concealed his person, even from his legal advisers.

This was the first really serious blow our squire had received. Hitherto he had courageously depended on his own innate cleverness to outwit the coming storm; now, within a few hours of the trial which was to determine his fate, he acknowledged himself without a resource or an expedient, beyond patience to attend to

the grave proceeding, sit it out, and endeavor to comprehend it.

To beguile the remainder of his sad evening, after receiving the attorney's communication, he repaired to his club-room. He found himself cut there. Issuing, in no pleasant mood, into the streets, he encountered, by lamplight, an individual in a red coat whom he had hitherto considered rather as a deferential hanger-on than as an acquaintance to boast of. Now, at least, by unbending himself, he need not fear a repulse; so he warmly stretched out both his hands, received a very distant bow of recognition, and was left alone under a lamp-post.

"By Cork!" said the squire, with a bitter laugh, "the puppy officer thinks I am turned upside down in the world already!"

The cause came on. Our good friend's eyes were riveted on every person who uttered a word upon one side or the other. The usual jollity of his countenance changed into the most painful expression of anxiety; and when anything witty was said by one of his Majesty's counsel, learned in the law, at which others laughed, his effort to second them was miserable to behold. And although it was a bitter cold day, the squire constantly wiped the perspiration from his forehead and face; chewing, between whites, a scrap of a quill which he had almost unconsciously picked off his seat.

The depositions, on his death-bed, of Daniel the huntsman, were tendered against him. They established the fact of the wretched self-accuser having kidnapped the heir of his then master, and handed the infant to his partner in crime. And the first living witness who appeared on the table was that witch, supposed to have been long dead, even by Daniel himself. She swore that she had intended to destroy the babe; that, however, having got it into her arms, she relented of her purpose, and gave it, with a bribe, to a strange woman, in a distant district, to expose for her on the high road. Next came the woman alluded to, and she proved that she had followed the directions of her employer, and afterwards watched, unseen, until an elderly lady of her neighborhood, passing by with a servant, picked up the little unfortunate. And, lastly, the aforesaid elderly lady, who, by the way, had endured so little scandal at the time, for her act of Christian charity, corroborated this person's testimony; and further deposed that she had carefully brought up, on limited means, until the day she procured him a commission in his Majesty's service, the plaintiff in the case at issue. Not a title of evidence, in contradiction to that stated, was offered by the defendant; and the only link of the chain of proof submitted by the heir-at-law, which the squire's counsel energetically sought to cut through, was that created by the first witness. On her cross-examination, it was ingeniously attempted to be impressed on the minds of the jury, that no reliance could be placed upon the oath of a depraved creature like her; that she had really made away with the infant, according to her original intention; and that the one she had offered for exposure must have been her own, the result of her acquaintance with the son of her benevolent and ill-requited protectress. But, without pausing upon details, we shall only say, that during the trial, sound confirmatory evidence of the truth of the miserable woman's assertion was supplied; and that, in fact, without hesitation, the jury found for the plaintiff.

Squire Hogan's look of consternation, when he heard the verdict, was pitiable. For a moment he bent down his head and wiped his forehead with his moist handkerchief. Then, with a wretched leer distorting his haggard countenance, he started up, and muttering indistinctly, bowed low to the judge, the jury, the bar, the public, all, as if he would humbly acknowledge the superiority of every human being. After this, forgetting his hat, he was hurrying away; some one placed it in his hand; he bowed lowly, and smiled again; and, finally forgetting the necessity to remain uncovered, he pressed it hard over his eyes and left the court; carrying with him the sincere and, in some instances, the tearful sympathy of the spectators.

As fast as horses could gallop with him, he left Dublin a few moments following.

"By Cork, Kate,"—he began, laughing, as his daughter, upon his arrival at the house which used to be his home, hurried to meet him; but he could not carry on the farce; his throat was full and choking; and suddenly throwing himself upon his child's neck, he sobbed aloud.

She understood him, but said nothing: she only kissed his cheeks and pressed his hands, keeping down all show of her own grief and alarm. "Woman! in such a situation, you can do this: man cannot: it is above the paltry selfishness of his nature."

He rallied, and tried to take up his absurd jeering tone, but soon tripped in it a second time.

"Ay, Kate—by the good old Jove, I'm a poorer man than the day I raffled for your mother; and you must work, suff enough, to try and

keep a little bread with us. If there's anything you think I can turn my hand to, only say the word, and you'll see I'll not be idle, my poor girl."

He entered into the details of his misfortunes and mortifications. Among other things, he mentioned the slight of "the puppy officer;" and neither his wonder nor his curiosity was excited, when, now for the first time, Catherine burst into tears.

It shows much good sense to take my Lady Law at her word. Fortune is fickle, but law is fickleness: the principle itself. And so seemed to argue the successful young aspirant to the squire's estate. While yet only expatiating on his past misfortunes, our worthy friend received a note which informed him in a quarter of an hour an authorized agent would arrive to take possession of the house and lands; and father and daughter had not recovered from the shock this gave them, when the agent was announced, and entered the room where they sat. Catherine turned away her face; she could not look at him.

"Possession of everything in the house, too?" asked the trembling squire—"every thing, you say?"

"Every thing," answered the agent, who was no man's agent but his own after all. Catherine started at his voice. "Yes, every thing; even of the angel that makes this house a heaven!" he advanced to her side. She turned to him—shrieked, laughed, and lay insensible in his arms. It was the squire's "puppy officer" in the first place; Catherine's faithful adorer in the second place; the plaintiff in the late action in the third place; and the triumphant hunter for his mistress's hand in the fourth place. Surely dear, fair reader, he had a claim on her. "Yes—if he account for his neglect since she left Dublin." Very good. That's easily done. He had vainly applied for leave of absence; and his letter advising her of the fact, as also of his intention to take the field for her, dressed in the costume of a picture of his then unknown father, (which, in the squire's town-house, Catherine had often pronounced very like him), that letter had miscarried.

"So your daughter is mine, good sir, on your own terms," added the four-fold hero.

"Capital, by Jove!—Capital! a glorious hoax, by Cork! capital!" laughed the ex-squire.

"I am delighted you think so; and I assure you, my dear sir, that I dressed myself up like the picture merely, at the time, to endeavor to recommend myself to your good opinion, by the oddity of the conceit; for I knew that you liked a hoax in your very heart."

"Give me your hand, my dear boy! Like a hoax!—Ah, don't I?—and it is such a prime one! choice! capital! capital, by the beard of the good old Jove!"—and, wringing his own hands, and transported by his feelings, the worthy man left the room, to describe and praise to his very servants what so much gladdened his soul.

"You were ignorant of your parentage upon the day of the hunt?" asked Catherine, after they had conversed some time together.

"I was. Upon the spot where the huntsman fell, I encountered the woman, returned from half a life of wandering, who exposed me in my infancy; she had been seeking me in Dublin, to unburden her conscience, and do me a tardy justice. I was on the road for the hunt; thither she followed me rapidly, and outstripped me some day; assuming the garb of the former witch of the cave, to conceal her identity. I need scarce say that from her I then received the information which enabled me to prosecute my claim. My beloved Catherine's sense of delicacy will readily suggest to her why I kept out of her view, from that day, until I could prove the truth or falsehood of her story. And now here I sit, able, thank heaven! to show to the woman of my heart that she did not quite misplace her generous love, when she gave it to a poor and friendless ensign, and with it the prospect of wealth, and of rank in the world."

It is recorded that, from this hour, Squire Hogan never wore, except perhaps when asleep, a serious face. Having resigned, "with a hearty good will," his commission of justice of the peace, there remained nothing on earth to compel him to "seem wise," as Bacon says; and he had full leisure to pursue, uninterruptedly, his practical hoaxes; which he himself, if nobody else did it for him, called "Capital! choice, by Cork's own town!"

REV. DR. CAHILL.

ON THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT OF 1858.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

England has had so much to do in her foreign dependencies during the year 1858, that our legislators have not been either willing or disposed to bestow even a passing thought on the affairs of Ireland. In two or three instances, where our friends asked questions, or called at

their official duties. The business of the nation has been suspended, and as it were brought to a dead lock, while the Parliament, like spectators in a Spanish Amphitheatre, look on at this celebrated fight now protracted beyond all former precedent. It is the battle of Conservative power against Whig strength: Ireland has small concern which side succeeds, since within the last few years her interests are nearly equally neglected by both. There is one advantage however in this noble contest; it proves there are several powerful parties in the house; and generally speaking when a party unites in one thing, they agree almost in every thing else. The agricultural or corn law party are almost universally Conservative, while the free-party are equally unanimous on Reform. Then there is the Methodist party, which is equally divided between both according as this class is located in the counties or the towns. The Church party is made up of sections of all three; and under given circumstances would be found the weakest of all. This division of forces, therefore, may yet so combine as to annihilate the Church Establishment fraud, and thus remove the greatest, I may say the sole grievance of Ireland. If, therefore, the Irish members silently look on the present contention between Parliamentary rivals, it is with some satisfaction they count the auxiliary forces of the Premier-Combatants, and calculate the probable time when coming circumstances will combine one of these forces, to expunge from the legislation of England one of the foulest statutes of injustice recorded in the history of the whole world.

Strange as it may appear at first sight, Ireland herself has a principal share in the neglect with which she is treated by these successive administrations. When she is herself divided in maintaining her national cause, how can she expect that Englishmen will be united in her defence? when Ireland cannot agree in stating the precise remedy for her grievances, how can England concede a boon for which the petitioners are not unanimous? How can England believe to be a certain advantage, what our own varying councils make doubtful? Our personal quarrels impede the progress of the public good; and the faithful, the unflinching, the unpurchaseable Irish tenants are injured by the petty squabbles of those in whose hands they have placed their liberties, and from whom they expect sympathy and protection in their martyr struggles in this world for sustenance against the approach of apostasy, famine, and death. There is, of course, no intention in this place of presuming to dictate, or of daring to find fault with individuals; our general conduct and its palpable results are the culprits which I arraign; and I but express the general impression felt at home and abroad—namely, that the Irish leaders have turned their arms against each other, weakened their power, gave strength to the enemy; thereby throwing victory into the hands of our deadly foes, and almost perfidiously, at least culpably, losing the battle of the faithful, confiding poor. As I write at no one, I shall reply to no one on this subject; but I shall bewail our national fault, which ever since the English invasion has been the curse of Irishmen, has wasted our resources, betrayed our liberties, chained our creed, and spread abject slavery and permanent degradation on our race and our faith.

If this state of things continue, would it not be better to place our national cause in the hands of a dozen honest, honorable Englishmen; and expect from the known steadiness and immovable perseverance of the English character that fixedness of opinion, and that practical tenacity of purpose, which, unfortunately for Ireland, with all her chivalry, her talents, her many other virtues, is not to be found in our national councils and practical action. A lesson from Canada could teach us, if any example could convince. Canada once threatened revolt: the severity of English legislation: the oppression, the monopoly of the Church Establishment, the discontented boundary of the United States: the protection offered to the rebellious from the Republican frontier, presented facilities for a national separation. England at once altered her policy, adjusted with impartiality the Church question, made her administrative justice equal to all: and ever since, amidst the disturbances of the Cape, the revolt in India, the discontent in Australia, there is not one breath of sedition wafted across the Atlantic from the comparatively happy altered legislation of our North American possessions. Of course there is no one so foolish as to think separation could benefit Ireland under the existing circumstances. But we can and ought to imitate Canada in our firm unity of sentiment, our unbroken combination of action: and England would soon be compelled to yield to national justice, which now, in our disaffected sections, we demand or beg in vain.

May 12. D. W. C.

The road that ambition travels is too narrow for friendship, too crooked for love, too rugged for honesty, and too dark for science.