Stories by English Authors: Ireland

Various

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IRELAND

THE GRIDIRON

BY SAMUEL LOVER

A certain old gentleman in the west of Ireland, whose love of the ridiculous quite equalled his taste for claret and fox-hunting, was wont, upon festive occasions, when opportunity offered, to amuse his friends by DRAWING OUT one of his servants, exceedingly fond of what he termed, his "thravels," and in whom a good deal of whim, some queer stories, and, perhaps more than all, long and faithful services had established a right of loquacity. He was one of those few trusty and privileged domestics who, if his master unheedingly uttered a rash thing in a fit of passion, would venture to set him right. If the squire said, "I'll turn that rascal off," my friend Pat would say, "Throth you won't, sir;" and Pat was always right, for if any altercation arose upon the "subject-matter in hand," he was sure to throw in some good reason, either from former services--general good conduct--or the delinquent's "wife and children," that always turned the scale.

But I am digressing. On such merry meetings as I have alluded to, the master, after making certain "approaches," as a military man would say, as the preparatory steps in laying siege to some extravaganza of his servant, might, perchance, assail Pat thus: "By the by, Sir John" (addressing a distinguished guest), "Pat has a very curious story, which something you told me to-day reminds me of. You remember, Pat" (turning to the man, evidently pleased at the notice thus paid to himself)--"you remember that queer adventure you had in France?"

"Throth I do, sir," grins forth Pat.

"What!" exclaims Sir John, in feigned surprise, "was Pat ever in France?"

"Indeed he was," cries mine host; and Pat adds, "Ay, and farther, plase your honour."

"I assure you, Sir John," continues mine host, "Pat told me a story once that surprised me very much, respecting the ignorance of the

French."

"Indeed!" rejoined the baronet; "really, I always supposed the French to be a most accomplished people."

"Throth, then, they're not, sir," interrupts Pat.

"Oh, by no means," adds mine host, shaking his head emphatically.

"I believe, Pat, 'twas when you were crossing the Atlantic?" says the master, turning to Pat with a seductive air, and leading into the "full and true account" (for Pat had thought fit to visit North Amerikay, for "a raison he had," in the autumn of the year ninety-eight).

"Yes, sir," says Pat, "the broad Atlantic"--a favourite phrase of his, which he gave with a brogue as broad, almost, as the Atlantic itself.

"It was the time I was lost in crassin' the broad Atlantic, a-comin' home," began Pat, decoyed into the recital; "whin the winds began to blow, and the saw to rowl, that you'd think the Colleen Dhas (that was her name) would not have a mast left but what would rowl out of her.

"Well, sure enough, the masts went by the hoard, at last, and the pumps were choked (divil choke them for that same), and av coorse the wather gained an us; and, throth, to be filled with wather is neither good for man or baste; and she was sinkin' fast, settlin' down, as the sailors call it; and, faith, I never was good at settlin' down in my life, and I liked it then less nor ever. Accordingly we prepared for the worst, and put out the boot, and got a sack o' bishkits and a cask o' pork and a kag o' wather and a thrifle o' rum aboord, and any other little matthers we could think iv in the mortial hurry we wor in--and, faith, there was no time to be lost, for, my darlint, the Colleen Dhas went down like a lump o' lead afore we wor many sthrokes o' the oar away from her.

"Well, we dhrifted away all that night, and next mornin' we put up a blanket an the end av a pole as well as we could, and then we sailed illegant; for we darn't show a stitch o' canvas the night before, bekase it was blowin' like bloody murther, savin' your presence, and sure it's the wondher of the worid we worn't swally'd alive by the ragin' sae.

"Well, away we wint, for more nor a week, and nothin' before our two good-lookin' eyes but the canophy iv heaven and the wide ocean--the broad Atlantic; not a thing was to be seen but the sae and the sky; and though the sae and the sky is mighty purty things in themselves, throth, they're no great things when you've nothin' else to look at for a week together; and the barest rock in the world, so it was land, would be more welkim. And then, soon enough, throth, our provisions began to run low, the bishkits and the wather and the rum--throth, THAT was gone first of all--God help uz!--and oh! it was thin that starvation began to stare us in the face. 'O murther, murther, Captain darlint,' says I, 'I wish we could land anywhere,' says I.

"'More power to your elbow, Paddy, my boy,' says he, 'for sitch a

good wish, and, throth, it's myself wishes the same.'

"'Och,' says I, 'that it may plase you, sweet queen iv heaven, supposing it was only a DISSOLUTE island,' says I, 'inhabited wid Turks, sure they wouldn't be such bad Chrishthans as to refuse us a bit and a sup.'

"'Whisht, whisht, Paddy,' says the captain, 'don't be talking bad of any one,' says he; 'you don't know how soon you may want a good word put in for yourself, if you should be called to quarthers in th' other world all of a suddint," says he.

"'Thrue for you, Captain darlint,' says I--I called him darlint, and made free with him, you see, bekase disthress makes us all equal--'thrue for you, Captain jewel--God betune uz and harm, I own no man any spite'--and, throth, that was only thruth. Well, the last bishkit was sarved out, and, by gor, the WATHER ITSELF was all gone at last, and we passed the night mighty cowld. Well, at the brake o' day the sun riz most beautifully out o' the waves, that was as bright as silver and as clear as chrystal. But it was only the more cruel upon us, for we wor beginnin' to feel TERRIBLE hungry; when all at wanst I thought I spied the land. By gor, I thought I felt my heart up in my throat in a minit, and 'Thunder an' turf, Captain,' says I, 'look to leeward,' says I.

"'What for?' says he.

"'I think I see the land,' says I.

"So hes ups with his bring-'em-near (that's what the sailors call a spy-glass, sir), and looks out, and, sure enough, it was.

"'Hurrah!' says he, 'we're all right now; pull away, my boys,' says he.

"'Take care you're not mistaken,' says I; 'maybe it's only a fog-bank, Captain darlint,' says I.

"'Oh no,' says he; 'it's the land in airnest.'

"'Oh, then, whereaboats in the wide world are we, Captain?' says I; 'maybe it id be in ROOSIA, or PROOSIA, the Garmant Oceant,' says I.

"'Tut, you fool,' says he, for he had that consaited way wid him, thinkin' himself cleverer nor any one else--'tut, you fool,' says he, 'that's FRANCE,' says he.

"'Tare an ouns,' says I, 'do you tell me so? and how do you know it's France it is, Captain dear?' says I.

"'Bekase this is the Bay o' Bishky we're in now,' says he.

"'Throth, I was thinkin' so myself,' says I, 'by the rowl it has; for I often heerd av it in regard of that same; and, throth, the likes av it I never seen before nor since, and, with the help of God, never will.'

"Well, with that, my heart began to grow light; and when I seen my

life was safe, I began to grow twice hungrier nor ever; so says I, 'Captain jewel, I wish we had a gridiron.'

"'Why, then,' says he, 'thunder an' turf,' says he, 'what puts a gridiron into your head?'

"'Bekase I'm starvin' with the hunger,' says I.

"'And, sure, bad luck to you,' says he, 'you couldn't eat a gridiron,' says he, 'barrin' you were a PELICAN O' THE WILDHERNESS,' says he.

"'Ate a gridiron!' says I. 'Och, in throth, I'm not such a gommoch all out as that, anyhow. But, sure, if we had a gridiron we could dress a beefstake,' says I.

"'Arrah! but where's the beefstake?' says he.

"'Sure, couldn't we cut a slice aff the pork?' says I.

"'By gor, I never thought o' that,' says the captain. 'You're a clever fellow, Paddy,' says he, laughin'.

"'Oh, there's many a true word said in joke,' says I.

"'Thrue for you, Paddy,' says he.

"'Well, then,' says I, 'if you put me ashore there beyant (for we were nearin' the land all the time), 'and, sure, I can ax them for to lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I.

"'Oh, by gor, the butther's comin' out o' the stirabout in airnest now,' says he; 'you gommoch,' says he, 'sure I told you before that's France--and, sure, they're all furriners there,' says the captain.

"'Well, says I, 'and how do you know but I'm as good a furriner myself as any o' thim?'

"'What do you mane?' says he.

"'I mane,' says I, 'what I towld you, that I'm as good a furriner myself as any o thim.'

"'Make me sinsible,' says he.

"'By dad, maybe that's more nor me, or greater nor me, could do,' says I; and we all began to laugh at him, for I thought I would pay him off for his bit o' consait about the Garmant Oceant.

"'Lave off your humbuggin',' says he, 'I bid you, and tell me what it is you mane at all at all.'

"'Parly voo frongsay?' says I.

"'Oh, your humble sarvant,' says he; 'why, by gor, you're a scholar, Paddy.'

"'Thruth, you may say that,' says I.

"'Why, you're a clever fellow, Paddy,' says the captain, jeerin' like.

"'You're not the first that said that,' says I, 'whether you joke or no.'

"'Oh, but I'm in airnest,' says the captain; 'and do you tell me, Paddy,' says he, 'that you spake Frinch?'

"'Parly voo frongsay?' says I.

"'By gor, that bangs Banagher, and all the world knows Banagher bangs the divil. I never met the likes o' you, Paddy,' says he. 'Pull away, boys, and put Paddy ashore, and maybe we won't get a good bellyful before long.'

"So, with that, it wos no sooner said nor done. They pulled away, and got close into shore in less than no time, and run the boat up in a little creek; and a beautiful creek it was, with a lovely white sthrand--an illegant place for ladies to bathe in the summer; and out I got; and it's stiff enough in the limbs I was, afther bein' cramped up in the boat, and perished with the cowld and hunger; but I conthrived to scramble on, one way or t' other, tow'rd a little bit iv a wood that was close to the shore, and the smoke curlin' out iv it, quite timptin' like.

"'By the powdhers o' war, I'm all right,' says I; 'there's a house there.' And, sure enough, there was, and a parcel of men, women, and childher, ating their dinner round a table, quite convanient. And so I wint up to the door, and I thought I'd be very civil to them, as I heerd the Frinch was always mighty p'lite intirely, and I thought I'd show them I knew what good manners was.

"So I took aff my hat, and, making a low bow, says I, 'God save all here,' says I.

"Well, to be sure, they all stapt ating at wanst, and began to stare at me, and, faith, they almost looked me out of countenance; and I thought to myself, it was not good manners at all, more betoken from furriners which they call so mighty p'lite. But I never minded that, in regard o' wantin' the gridiron; and so says I, 'I beg your pardon,' says I, 'for the liberty I take, but it's only bein' in disthress in regard of ating,' says I, 'that I made bowld to throuble yez, and if you could lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'I'd be intirely obleeged to ye.'

"By gor, they all stared at me twice worse nor before, and with that, says I (knowing what was in their minds), 'Indeed, it's thrue for you,' says I. 'I'm tatthered to pieces, and God knows I look quare enough; but it's by raison of the storm,' says I, 'which dhruv us ashore here below, and we're all starvin',' says I.

"So then they began to look at each other again; and myself seeing at once dirty thoughts was in their heads, and that they tuk me for a poor beggar coming to crave charity, with that says I, 'Oh, not at all,' says I, 'by no manes--we have plenty of mate ourselves there below, and we'll dhress it,' says I, 'if you would be plased to lind us the loan of a gridiron,' says I, makin' a low bow.

"Well, sir, with that, throth, they stared at me twice worse nor ever, and, faith, I began to think that maybe the captain was wrong, and that it was not France at all at all; and so says I, 'I beg pardon, sir,' says I to a fine ould man, with a head of hair as white as silver; 'maybe I'm under a mistake,' says I, 'but I thought I was in France, sir; aren't you furriners?' says I. 'Parly voo frongsay?'

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then would you lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'if you plase?'

"Oh, it was thin that they stared at me as if I had seven heads; and, faith, myself began to feel flushed like and onaisy; and so says I, makin' a bow and scrape ag'in, 'I know it's a liberty I take, sir,' says I, 'but it's only in the regard of bein' cast away; and if you plase, sir,' says I, 'parly voo frongsay?'

"'We, munseer,' says he, mighty sharp.

"'Then would you lind me the loan of a gridiron?' says I, 'and you'll obleege me.'

"Well, sir, the ould chap began to munseer me; but the divil a bit of a gridiron he'd gi' me; and so I began to think they wor all neygars, for all their fine manners; and, throth, my blood begun to rise, and says I, 'By my sowl, if it was you was in disthress,' says I, 'and if it was to ould Ireland you kem, it's not only the gridiron they'd give you, if you axed it, but something to put an it, too, and the drop o' dhrink into the bargain, and cead mile failte.'

"Well, the word cead mile failte seemed to sthreck his heart, and the ould chap cocked his ear, and so I thought I'd give him another offer, and make him sinsible at last; and so says I, wanst more, quite slow, that he might understand, 'Parly--voo--frongsay, munseer?'

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'and bad scram to you.'

"Well, bad win to the bit of it he'd gi' me, and the ould chap begins bowin' and scrapin', and said something or other about a long tongs.

[Footnote: Some mystification of Paddy's touching the French n'tends.]

"'Phoo!--the divil swape yourself and your tongs,' says I; 'I don't want a tongs at all at all; but can't you listen to raison?' says I. 'Parly voo frongsay?'

"'We, munseer.'

"'Then lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'and howld your prate.'

"Well, what would you think, but he shook his old noddle as much as to say he wouldn't; and so says I, 'Bad cess to the likes o' that I ever seen! Throth, if you wor in my counthry, it's not that away they'd use you. The curse o' the crows an you, you ould sinner,' says I; 'the divil a longer i'll darken your door.'

"So he seen I was vexed; and I thought, as I was turnin' away, I seen him begin to relint, and that his conscience throubled him; and says I, turnin' back, 'Well, I'll give you one chance more, you ould thief. Are you a Chrishthan at all? Are you a furriner,' says I,' that all the world calls so p'lite? Bad luck to you, do you understand your own language? Parly voo frongsay?' says I.

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then, thunder an' turf,' says I, 'will you lind me the loan of a gridiron?'

"Well, sir, the divil resa've the bit of it he'd gi' me; and so, with that, 'The curse o' the hungry an you, you ould neygarly villain,' says I; 'the back o' my hand and the sowl o' my foot to you, that you may want a gridiron yourself yit,' says I. And with that I left them there, sir, and kem away; and, in throth, it's often sense that I thought that it was remarkable."

THE EMERGENCY MEN

BY GEORGE H. JESSOP

The fourth morning after his arrival in Dublin, Mr. Harold Hayes, of New York, entered the breakfast-room of the Shelbourne Hotel in a very bad humour. He was sick of the city, of the people, and of his own company. Before leaving London he had written to his friend, Jack Connolly, that he was coming to Ireland, and he had expected to find a reply at the Shelbourne. For three days he had waited in vain, and it was partly, at least, on Jack's account that Mr. Hayes was in Ireland at all. When Jack sailed from New York he had bound Harold by a solemn promise to spend a few weeks at Lisnahoe on his next visit to Europe. Miss Connelly, who had accompanied her brother on his American tour, had echoed and indorsed the invitation.

Harold had naturally expected to find at the hotel a letter urging him to take the first train for the south. He had seen a great deal of the Connellys during their stay in the United States, and Jack and he had become firm friends. He had crossed at this unusual season mainly on Jack's account--on Jack's account and his sister's; so it was little wonder if the young man considered himself ill used. He felt that he had been lured across the Irish Channel--across the Atlantic Ocean itself--on false pretences.

But in a moment the cloud lifted from his brow, a quick smile stirred under his yellow moustache, and his eyes brightened, for a waiter handed him a letter. It lay, address uppermost, on the salver, and bore the Ballydoon postmark, and the handwriting was the disjointed scrawl which he had often ridiculed, but now welcomed as Jack Connolly's.

This is what Hayes read as he sipped his coffee:

LISNAHOE, December 23d.

MY DEAR HAROLD: Home I come from Ballinasloe yesterday, and find your letter, the best part of a week old, kicking about among the bills and notices of meets that make the biggest end of my correspondence. You must be destroyed entirely, my poor fellow, if you've been three days in dear dirty Dublin, and you not knowing a soul in it. Come down at once, and you'll find a hearty welcome here if you won't find much else. I don't see why you couldn't have come anyhow, without waiting to write; but you were always so confoundedly ceremonious. We're rather at sixes and sevens, for the governor's got "in howlts" with his tenants and we're boycotted. It's not bad fun when you're used to it, but a trifle inconvenient in certain small ways. Let me know what train you take and I'll meet you at the station. You must be here for Christmas Day anyhow. Polly sends her regards, and says she knew the letter was from you, and she came near opening it. I'm sure I wish she had, and answered it, for I'm a poor fist at a letter.

Yours truly,

JACK CONNOLLY.

The first available train carried Harold southward. On the way he read the letter again. The notion of entering a boycotted household amused and pleased him. He had never been in Ireland before, and he was quite willing that his first visit should be well spiced with the national flavour. Of course he had his views on the Irish question. Every American newspaper reader is cheerfully satisfied with the conviction that the Celtic race on its native sod has no real faults. A constitutional antipathy to rent may exist, but that is a national foible which, owing doubtless to some peculiarity of the climate, is almost praiseworthy in Ireland, though elsewhere regarded as hardly respectable. At any rate, with the consciousness that he was about to come face to face with the much-talked-of boycott, Harold's spirits rose, and as he read Polly Connolly's message they rose still higher. He was a lively young fellow, and fond of excitement. And at one time, as he recalled with a smile and a sigh, he had been almost fond of Polly Connolly.

When he alighted at the station--a small place in Tipperary--the dusk of the early winter evening was closing in, and Harold recollected that his prompt departure from Dublin had prevented him from apprising Jack of his movements. Of course there would be no trap from Lisnahoe to meet this train, but that mattered little. Half a dozen hack-drivers were already extolling the merits of their various conveyances, and imploring his patronage.

Selecting the best-looking car, he swung himself into his seat, while the "jarvey" hoisted his portmanteau on the other side.

"Where to, yer honour?" inquired the latter, climbing to his place.

"To Lisnahoe House," answered Hayes.

"Where?"

This question was asked with a vehemence that startled the young American.

"Lisnahoe. Don't you know the way?" he replied.

"In troth an' I do. Is it Connolly's?"

"Yes," answered Harold. "Drive on, my good fellow; it's growing late."

The man's only answer was to spring from his seat and seize Harold's portmanteau, which he deposited on the road with no gentle hand.

"What do you mean?" cried the young man, indignantly.

"I mane that ye'd betther come down out o' that afore I make ye."

Harold was on the ground in a moment and approached the man with clinched fists and flashing eyes.

"How dare you, you scoundrel! Will you drive me to Lisnahoe or will you not?"

"The divil a fut," answered the fellow, sullenly.

Hayes controlled his anger by an effort. There was nothing to be gained by a row with the man. He turned to another driver.

"Pick up that portmanteau. Drive me out to Mr. Connolly's. I'll pay double fare."

But they all with one consent, like the guests in the parable, began to make excuse. One man's horse was lame, another's car was broken down; the services of a third had been "bespoke." Few were as frank as the man first engaged, but all were prompt with the obvious lies, scarcely less aggravating than actual rudeness. The station-master appeared, and attempted to use his influence in the traveller's behalf, but he effected nothing.

"You'll have to walk, sir," said the official, civilly. "I'll keep your portmanteau here till Mr. Connolly sends for it." And he carried the luggage back into the station.

"How far is it to Mr. Connolly's?" Harold inquired of a ragged urchin who had strolled up with several companions.

"Fish an' find out," answered the youngster, with a grin.

"We'll tache them to be sendin' Emergency men down here," said another.

The New-Yorker was fast losing patience.

"This is Irish hospitality and native courtesy," he remarked, bitterly. "Will any one tell me the road I am to follow?"

"Folly yer nose," a voice shouted; and there was a general laugh, in the midst of which the station-master reappeared.

He pointed out the way, and Harold trudged off to accomplish, as best he might, five Irish miles over miry highways and byways through the darkness of the December evening.

This was the young American's first practical experience of boycotting.

It was nearly seven o'clock when, tired and mud-bespattered, he reached Lisnahoe; but the warmth of his reception there went far to banish all recollection of the discomforts of his solitary tramp. A hearty hand-clasp from Jack, a frank and smiling greeting from Polly (she looked handsomer than ever, Harold thought, with her lustrous black hair and soft, dark-gray eyes), put him at his ease at once. Then came introductions to the rest of the family. Mr. Connolly, stout and white-haired, bade him welcome in a voice which owned more than a touch of Tipperary brogue. Mrs. Connolly, florid and good-humoured, was very solicitous for his comfort. The children confused him at first. There were so many of them, of all sizes, that Hayes abandoned for the present any attempt to distinguish them by name. There was a tall lad of twenty or thereabouts,--a faithful copy of his elder brother Jack,--who was addressed as Dick, and a pretty, fair-haired girl of seventeen, whom, as Polly's sister, Harold was prepared to like at once. She was Agnes. After these came a long array,--no less than nine more,--ending with a sturdy little chap of three, whom Polly presently picked up and carried off to bed. Mr. Connolly, of Lisnahoe, could boast of a full quiver.

There was a general chorus of laughter as Harold related his experience at the railway-station. The Connollys had rested for several days under the ban of the most rigid boycott, and had become used to small discomforts. They faced the situation bravely, and turned all such petty troubles into jest; but the American was sorely disquieted to learn that there was only one servant in the house--an old man who for many years had blacked boots and cleaned knives for the family, and who had refused to crouch to heel under the lash of the boycott.

Harold stammered an apology for his unseasonable visit, but Jack cut him short.

"Nonsense, man; the more the merrier. We're glad to have you, and if you can rough it a bit you won't find it half bad fun."

"Oh, I don't mind, I'm sure," said Harold; "only I'm afraid you'd rather have your house to yourselves at such a time as this."

"Not we. Why, we expect some Emergency men down here in a few days. We'll treat you as the advance guard; we'll set you to work and give you your grub the same as an Emergency man."

"What is an Emergency man?" inquired Harold. "Those Chesterfieldian

drivers at the station seemed to think it was the worst name they could call me."

A hearty laugh went round the circle.

"If they took ye for an Emergency man, it's small wonder they were none too swate on ye," observed Mr. Connolly.

"But what does it mean?" asked the New-Yorker.

"Well," began the old gentleman, "there's good and bad in this world of ours. When tenants kick and labourers clare out, an' a boycott's put on a man, they'd lave yer cattle to die an' yer crops to rot for all they care. It's what they want. Well, there happens to be a few dacent people left in Ireland yet, and they have got up an organization they call the Emergency men; they go to any part of the country and help out people that have been boycotted through no fault of their own--plough their fields or reap their oats or dig their potatoes, an' generally knock the legs out from under the boycott. It stands to reason that the blackguards in these parts hate an Emergency man as the divil hates holy water; but ye may take it as a compliment that ye were mistook for one, for all that."

Here Dick thrust his head into the door of the large library, in which the party was assembled.

"Dinner is served, my lords and ladies," he cried; and there was a general movement toward the dining-room.

"No ceremony here, my boy," laughed Jack, as he led Harold across the hall. "I'll be your cavalier and show you the way. The girls are in the kitchen, I suppose."

But Miss Connolly and Agnes were already in the dining-room, and the party gathered round the well-spread board and proceeded to do full justice to the good things thereon. The meal was more like a picnic than a set dinner. Old Peter Dwyer, the last remaining retainer, had never attended at table, so he confined himself to kitchen duties, while the young Connollys waited on themselves and on each other. A certain little maid, whom Harold by this time had identified as Bella, devoted herself to the stranger, and took care that neither his glass nor his plate should be empty. A glance of approval, which he intercepted on its way from Miss Connolly to her little sister, told Harold that Bella had been given a charge concerning him, and he appreciated the attention none the less on that account, while he ate his dinner with the agreeable confidence that it had been prepared by Miss Polly's own fair hands.

Everything at table was abundant and good of its kind, and conversation was alert and merry, as it is apt to be in a large family party. So far, the boycott seemed to have anything but a depressing effect, though Harold could not help smiling as he realised how it would have crushed to powder more than one estimable family of his acquaintance.

After dinner Jack rose, saying that he must go round to the stables and bed down the horses for the night. Harold accompanied him, and acquitted himself very well with a pitchfork, considering that he had little experience with such an implement. he had gone with a couple of the younger boys to chop turnips for certain cattle which

were being fattened for the market.

"How did you come to be boycotted?" inquired Harold, with some curiosity, as soon as he found himself alone with Jack.

"Oh, it doesn't take much talent to accomplish that nowadays," answered the young Irishman, with a laugh. "In the first place, the governor has a habit of asking for his rent, which is an unpopular proceeding at the best of times. In the second place, I bought half a dozen bullocks from a boycotted farmer out Limerick way."

"And is that all?" asked Harold, in astonishment. Notwithstanding his regard for his friend, he had never doubted that there must have been some appalling piece of persecution to justify this determined ostracism.

"All!" echoed Jack, laughing. "You don't know much of Ireland, my boy, or you wouldn't ask that question. We bought cattle that had been raised by a farmer on land from which a defaulting tenant had been evicted. Men have been shot in these parts for less than that."

"Pleasant state of affairs," remarked the New-Yorker.

"I don't much care," Jack went on, lightly. "We're promised a couple of Emergency men from Ulster in a few days, and that will take the weight of the work off our hands. It isn't as if it were a busy time. No crops to be saved in winter, you see, and no farm work except stall-feeding the cattle. That can't wait."

"But your sisters--all the work of that big house--" began Harold, who was thinking of Polly.

"We expect two Protestant girls down from Belfast to-morrow. That'll be all right. We get all our grub from Dublin,--they won't sell us anything in Ballydoon,--and we mean to keep on doing so, boycott or no boycott. We have been about the best customers to the shopkeepers round here, and it'll come near ruining the town--and serve them right," the young man added, with the first touch of bitterness he had displayed in speaking of the persecution of his family.

By next day the situation had improved. A couple of servant-girls arrived from the north. They were expected, and accordingly Dick was on hand with the jaunting-car to meet them and drive them from the station. The Emergency men had not yet appeared, so Jack and such of his brothers as were old enough to be of use were kept pretty busy round the place. Harold had wished to return to England and postpone his visit till a more convenient time, but to this no one would listen. He made no trouble; he was not a bit in the way; in fact, he was a great help. So said they all, and the young New-Yorker was quite willing to believe them.

He did occasionally offer assistance in stable or farm-yard, but he much preferred to spend his time rambling over the old place, admiring the lawns, the woods, the gardens, all strangely silent and deserted now. Miss Connolly was often his companion. The importation from Belfast relieved her of some of the pressure of household cares, and since her brothers were fully occupied, it devolved upon her to play host as well as hostess, and point out to the stranger the various charms of Lisnahoe.

This suited Harold exactly. He usually carried a gun and sometimes shot a rabbit or a wood-pigeon, but generally he was content to listen to Polly's lively conversation, and gaze into the depths of her eyes, wondering why they looked darker and softer here under the shadow of her native woods than they had ever seemed in the glare and dazzle of a New York ball-room. Harold Hayes was falling in love--falling consciously, yet without a struggle. He was beginning to realise that life could have nothing better in store for him than this tall, graceful girl, in her becoming sealskin cap and jacket, whose little feet, so stoutly and serviceably shod, kept pace with his own over so many miles of pleasant rambles.

One day--it was the last of the old year--Miss Connolly and Harold were strolling along a path on which the wintry sunshine was tracing fantastic patterns as it streamed through the naked branches of the giant beech-trees. The young man had a gun on his shoulder, but he was paying little attention to the nimble rabbits that now and then frisked across the road. He was thinking, and thinking deeply.

He could not hope for many more such quiet walks with his fair companion. She would soon have more efficient chaperons than the children, who often made a pretence of accompanying them, but invariably dashed off, disdainful of the sober pace of their elders. Before long--next day probably--he would be handed over to the tender mercies of Jack, who had constantly lamented the occupations that prevented his paying proper attention to his guest. The heir of Lisnahoe had promised to show the young stranger some "real good sport" as soon as other duties would permit. That time was close at hand now. The Emergency men had been at work for several days; they were thoroughly at home in their duties; besides, the fat cattle would be finished very shortly and sent off to be sold in Dublin. Jack had announced his intention of stealing a holiday on the morrow, and taking Hayes to a certain famous "snipe bottom," when the game was, to use Dick's expression, "as thick as plums in one of Polly's puddings."

It was hard to guess then they might have such another rumble, and Harold had much to say to the girl at his side; and yet, for the life of him, he could not utter the words that were trembling on his lips.

"I don't believe you care much for shooting, Mr. Hayes."

A rabbit loped slowly across die road not twenty yards from the gun, but Harold had not noticed it. He roused himself with a start, however, at the sound of his companion's voice.

"Oh yes, I do, sometimes," he answered, glancing alertly to both sides of the road; but no game was in sight for the moment.

"If this frost should break up, you may have some hunting," pursued Miss Connolly. "I'm afraid you're having an awfully stupid time."

Harold interposed an eager denial.

"Oh yes, you must be," insisted the young lady; "but Jack will find more time now, and if we have a thaw you will have a day with the

hounds. Are you fond of hunting?"

"I am very fond of riding, but I have never hunted," answered the New-Yorker.

"Just like me. I am never so happy as when I am on horseback, but mamma won't let me ride to hounds. She says she does not approve of ladies on the field. It is traditional, I suppose, that every mistress of Lisnahoe should oppose hunting."

"Indeed, why so?" inquired Harold.

"Why, don't you know?" asked the girl. "Has nobody told you our family ghost-story?"

"No one as yet," answered Hayes.

"Then mine be the pleasing task; and there is a peculiar fitness in your hearing it just now, for to-morrow will be New-Year's Day."

Harold failed to see the applicability of the date, but he made no observation, and Miss Connolly went on.

"Ever so many years ago this place belonged to an ancestor of mine who was devoted to field-sports of all kinds. He lived for nothing else, people thought, but suddenly he surprised all the world by getting married."

Harold thought that if her remote grandmother had chanced to resemble the fair young girl at his side, there was a good excuse for the sportsman; but he held his tongue.

"The bride was exacting--or perhaps she was only timid. At any rate, she used her influence to wean her husband from his outdoor pursuits--especially hunting. He must have been very much in love with her, for she succeeded, and he promised to give it all up--after one day more. It seems that he could not get out of this last run. The meet was on the lawn; the hunt breakfast was to be at Lisnahoe House. In short, it was an affair that could neither be altered nor postponed.

"This meet," continued Polly, "was on New-Year's Day. There was a great gathering, and after breakfast the gentlemen came out and mounted at the door; the hounds were grouped on the lawn; it must have been a beautiful sight."

"It must, indeed," assented Harold.

"Well, this old Mr. Connolly--but you must understand that he was not old at all, only all this happened so long ago--he mounted his horse, and his wife came out on the step to bid him good-bye, and to remind him of his promise that this should be his last hunt. And so it was, poor fellow; for while she was standing talking to him, a gust of wind came and blew part of her dress right into the horse's face. Mr. Connolly was riding a very spirited animal. It reared up and fell back on him, killing him on the spot."

"How horrible!" exclaimed Harold.

"Wait! The shock to the young wife was so great that she died the next day."

"The poor girl!"

"Don't waste your sympathy. It was all very long ago, and perhaps it never happened at all. However, the curious part of the story is to come. Every one that had been present at that meet--men, dogs, horses--everything died within the year."

"To the ruin of the local insurance companies?" remarked Harold, with a smile.

"You needn't laugh. They did. And next New-Year's night, between twelve and one o'clock, the whole hunt passed through the place, and they have kept on doing it every New-Year's night since."

"A most interesting and elaborate ghost-story," said Harold. "Pray, Miss Connolly, may I ask if you yourself have seen the phantom hunt?"

"No one has ever done that," replied Polly, "but when there is moonlight they say the shadows can be seen passing over the grass, and any New-Year's night you may hear the huntsman's horn."

"I should like amazingly to hear it," replied the young man. "Have you ever heard this horn?"

"I have heard A horn," the girl answered, with some reluctance.

"On New-Year's night between twelve and one?" he pursued.

"Of course--but I can't swear it was blown by a ghost. My brothers or some one may have been playing tricks. You can sit up to-night and listen for yourself if you want."

"Nothing I should like better," exclaimed Harold. "Will you sit up too?"

"Oh yes. We always wait to see the Old Year out and the New Year in. Come, Mr. Hayes, it's almost luncheon-time," she added, glancing at her watch; and they turned back toward the house, which was just visible through the leafless trees.

Harold walked at her side in silence. He had heard a ghost-story, but the words he had hoped to speak that day were still unuttered.

Loud were the pleadings, when the little ones' bedtime came, that they might be allowed to sit up to see the Old Year die; but Mrs. Connolly was inexorable. The very young ones were sent off to bed at their usual hour.

Cards and music passed the time pleasantly till the clock was almost on the stroke of twelve. Then wine was brought in, and healths were drunk, and warm, cheerful wishes were uttered, invoking all the blessings that the New Year might have in store. Hands were clasped and kisses were exchanged. Harold would willingly have been included in this last ceremony, but that might not be. However, he could and did press Polly's hand very warmly, and the earnestness

of the wishes he breathed in her ear called a bright colour to her cheek. Then came good-night, and the young American's heart grew strangely soft when he found himself included in Mrs. Connolly's motherly blessing. He thought he had never seen a happier, a more united family.

The party was breaking up; some had retired; others were standing, bedroom candlesticks in their hands, exchanging a last word, when suddenly, out of the silence of the night, the melodious notes of a huntsman's horn echoed through the room. Harold recalled the legend, and paused at the door, mute and wondering.

Jack and his father exchanged glances.

"Now which of you's tryin' to humbug us this year?" asked the old man, laughing, while Jack looked round and proceeded, as he said, to "count noses."

This was a useless attempt, for half the party that had sat up to wait for the New Year had already disappeared.

Dick sprang to the window and threw it open, but the night was cloudy and dark.

Again came the notes of the horn, floating in through the open window, and almost at the same moment there was a sound of hoofs crunching the gravel of the drive as a dozen or more animals swept past at wild gallop.

"This is past a joke," cried Jack. "I never heard of the old hunt materializing in any such way as this."

They rushed to the front door--Jack, Mr. Connolly, all of them. Harold reached it first. Wrenching it open, he stood on the step, while the others crowded about him and peered out into the night. Only darkness, rendered mirker by the lights in the hall; and from the distance, fainter now, came the measured beat of the galloping hoofs.

No other sound? Yes, a long-drawn, quivering, piteous sigh; and as their eyes grew more accustomed to the night, out of the darkness something white shaped itself--something prone and helpless, lying on the gravel beneath the lowest step. They did not stop to speculate as to what it might be. With a single impulse, Jack and Harold sprang down, and between them they carried back into the hall the inanimate body of Polly Connolly.

Her eyes were closed and her face was as white as the muslin dress she wore. Clutched in her right hand was a hunting-horn belonging to Dick. It was evident that the girl had stolen out unobserved to reproduce--perhaps for the visitor's benefit--the legendary notes of the phantom huntsman. This was a favorite joke among the young Connollys, and scarcely a New-Year's night passed that it was not practised by one or other of the large family; but what had occurred to-night? Whence came those galloping hoofs, and what was the explanation of Polly's condition?

The swoon quickly yielded to the usual remedies, but even when she revived it was some time before the girl could speak intelligibly.

Her voice was broken by hysterical sobs; she trembled in every limb. It was evident that her nerves had received a severe shock.

While the others were occupied with Polly, Dick had stepped out on the gravel sweep, where he was endeavouring, by close examination, to discover some clue to the puzzle. Suddenly he ran back into the house.

"Something's on fire!" he cried. "I believe it's the yard."

They all pressed to the open door--all except Mrs. Connolly, who still busied herself with her daughter, and Harold, whose sole interest was centred in the girl he loved.

Above a fringe of shrubbery which masked the farm-yard, a red glow lit up the sky. It was evident the buildings were on fire. And even while they looked a man, half dressed, panting, smoke-stained, dashed up the steps. It was Tom Neil, one of the Emergency men.

These men slept in the yard, in the quarters vacated by the deserting coachman. In a few breathless words the big, raw-boned Ulsterman told the story of the last half-hour.

He and his comrade Fergus had been awakened by suspicious sounds in the yard. Descending, they had found the cattle-shed in flames. Neil had forced his way in and had liberated and driven out the terrified bullocks. The poor animals, wild with terror, had burst from the yard and galloped off in the direction of the house. This accounted for the trampling hoofs that had swept across the lawn, but scarcely for Polly's terrified condition. A country-bred girl like Miss Connolly would not lose her wits over the spectacle of a dozen fat oxen broken loose from their stalls. Had the barn purposely burned, and had the girl fallen in with the retreating incendiaries?

It seemed likely. No one there doubted the origin of the fire, and Mr. Connolly expressed the general feeling as he shook his head and murmered:

"I mistrusted that they wouldn't let us get them cattle out o' the country without some trouble."

"But where is Fergus?" demanded Jack, suddenly.

"Isn't he here?" asked the Ulsterman. "When we seen the fire he started up to the big house to give the alarm, while I turned to to save the bullocks."

"No, he never came to the house," answered Jack, and there was an added gravity in his manner as he turned to his brother.

"Get a lantern, Dick. This thing must be looked into at once."

While the boy went in search of a light, Mr. Connolly attempted to obtain from his daughter a connected statement of what had happened and how much she had seen; but she was in no condition to answer questions. The poor girl could only sob and moan and cover her face with her hands, while convulsive tremblings shook her slight figure.

"Oh, don't ask me, papa; don't speak to me about it. It was dreadful--dreadful. I saw it all."

This was all they could gain from her.

"Don't thrubble the poor young lady," interposed old Peter, compassionately. "Sure, the heart's put acrass in her wid the fright. Lave her be till mornin'."

There seemed nothing else to be done, so Polly was left in charge of her mother and sister, while the men, headed by Dick, who carried a lantern, set out to examine the grounds.

There was no trace of Fergus between the house and the farm-yard. The lawn was much cut up by the cattle, for the frost had turned to rain early in the evening, and a rapid thaw was in progress. The ground was quite soft on the surface, and it was carefully scrutinised for traces of footsteps, but nothing could be distinguished among the hoof-prints of the bullocks.

In the yard all was quiet. The fire had died down; the roof of the cattle-shed had fallen in and smothered the last embers. The barn was a ruin, but no other damage had been done, and there were no signs of the missing man.

They turned back, this time making a wider circle. Almost under the kitchen window grew a dense thicket of laurel and other evergreen shrubs. Dick stooped and let the light of the lantern penetrate beneath the overhanging branches.

There, within three steps of the house, lay Fergus, pale and blood-stained, with a sickening dent in his temple--a murdered man.

Old Peter Dwyer was the first to break the silence: "The Lord be good to him! They've done for him this time, an' no mistake."

The lifeless body was lifted gently and borne toward the house. Harold hastened in advance to make sure that none of the ladies were astir to be shocked by the grisly sight. The hall was deserted. Doubtless Polly's condition demanded all their attention.

"The girl saw him murdered," muttered Mr. Connolly. "I thought it must have been something out of the common to upset her so."

"D' ye think did she, sir?" asked old Peter, eagerly.

"I havnen't a doubt of it," replied the old gentlemen shortly. "Thank goodness, her evidence will hang the villain, whoever he may be." "Ah, the poor thing, the poor thing!" murmured the servant, and then the sad procession entered the house.

The body was laid on a table. It would have been useless to send for a surgeon. There was not one to be found within several miles, and it was but too evident that life was extinct. The top of the

man's head was beaten to a pulp. He had been clubbed to death.

"If it costs me every shilling I have in the world, and my life to the boot of it," said Mr. Connolly, "I'll see the ruffians that

did the deed swing for their night's work."

"Amin," assented Peter, solemnly; and Jack's handsome face darkened as he mentally recorded an oath of vengeance.

"There'll be little sleep for this house to-night," resumed the old gentleman after a pause. "I'm goin' to look round and see if the doors are locked, an' then take a look at Polly. An', Peter."

"Sir!"

"The first light in the mornin'--it's only a few hours off," he added, with a glance at his watch --"you run over to the police station, and give notice of what's happened."

"I will, yer honour."

"Come upstairs with me, boys. I want to talk with you. Good-night, Mr. Hayes. This has been a blackguard business, but there's no reason you should lose your rest for it."

Mr. Connolly left the room, resting his arms on the shoulders of his two sons. Harold glanced at the motionless figure of the murdered man, and followed. He did not seek his bedroom, however; he knew it would be idle to think of sleep. He entered the smoking-room, lit a cigar, and threw himself into a chair to wait for morning.

All his ideas as to the Irish question had been changing insensibly during his visit to Lisnahoe. This night's work had revolutionised them. He saw the agrarian feud--not as he had been wont to read of it, glozed over by the New York papers. He saw it as it was--in all its naked, brutal horror.

He had observed that there had been no attempt on the Connollys to appeal to neighbours for sympathy in this time of trouble, and he had asked Jack the reason. Jack's answer had been brief and pregnant.

"Where's the good? We're boycotted."

And that dead man lying on the table outside was only an example of boycotting carried to its logical conclusion.

The sound of a door closing softly aroused Harold from his reverie. A little postern leading from the servants' quarters opened close to the smoking-room window. Harold looked out, and, as the night had grown clearer, he distinctly saw old Pete Dwyer making his way with elaborate caution down the shrubery path.

"Going to the police station, I suppose," mused Hayes. "Well, he has started betimes."

Then he resumed his seat and thought of Polly.

What a shock for her, poor girl, to leave a happy home with her heart full of innocent mirth, only to encounter murder lurking red-handed at the very threshold!

"I wish I had spoken to her to-day," he muttered. "Goodness alone knows when I shall find a chance now. I wonder how she is?"

He realised that he could see nothing of her till breakfast time at any rate--if, indeed, she would be strong enough to appear at that meal. He had been sitting in the dark; he now threw aside his cigar, and, drawing his chair closer to the window, set himself resolutely to watch for the dawn and solace his vigil with dreams of Polly.

A raw, chill air blew into the room. He noticed that a pane of glass was broken. One of the children had thrown a ball through it a few days before, and in the present situation of the Connolly household a glazier was an unattainable luxury.

Harold rose with the intention of moving his chair out of the draught, but as he did so the sound of whispered words, seemingly at his very ear, made him pause. The voices came from the shrubbery below the window, and in one of them he recognised the unmistakable brogue of old Peter Dwyer.

Had the man been to the police station and returned with the constables so quickly? This was Harold's first thought, but he dismissed it as soon as formed. Peter had been barely half an hour absent, and the station was several miles off. Where had he been, then, and with whom was he conversing? Harold bent his head close to the broken pane and listened.

"Are ye sure sartin that the young woman seen us?" inquired a rough voice--not Peter's--"because this is goin' to be an ugly job, an' there's no call for us to tackle it widout needcessity?"

"Sartin as stalks," whispered the old servant. "She was all of a thrimble, as if she'd met a sperrit an' all the words she had was 'I seen it--I seen it all,' an' she yowlin' like a banshee."

"It's quare we didn't take notice to her, for she must ha' been powerful close to see us such a night. I thought I heerd the horn, too, an' I lavin' the yard."

She wint out to blow it," whispered Peter. "Most like it was stuck in the shrubbery she was."

"Come on thin," growled the other; "it's got to be done, an' the byes is all here. Ye left the little dure beyant on the latch?"

"I did that," responded old Peter; and then a low, soft whistle sounded in the darkness. It was a signal.

Rapidly but cautiously Harold Hayes left the window and stole across the room. He understood it all. Polly had seen the murder and had recognised the assassins. Old Dwyer was a traitor. He had slipped out and warned the ruffians of the peril in which they stood, and now they were here to seal their own safety by another crime --by the sacrifice of a life far dearer to Harold than his own.

Swiftly, silently, he sped down the gloomy passage. The lives of all beneath that roof were hanging on his speed. Breathless he reached the little door, and flung himself against it with all his weight while his trembling fingers groped in the darkness for bolt

or bar.

A heavy hand was laid on the latch, and the door was tried from without.

"How's this, Peter?" inquired the rough voice. "I thought ye said it wasn't locked."

"No more it is; it's only stiff it is, bad cess to it. Push hard, yer sowl ye."

But at this moment Harold's hand encountered the bolt. With a sigh of relief he shot it into the socket, and then, searching farther, he supplemented the defences with a massive bar, which, he knew, ought always to be in place at night.

Then he sped back along the passage, while muttered curses reached his ears from without, and the door was shaken furiously.

"Jack, Jack," he panted, as he flung open the door of the room in which the young men slept--"Jack, come down and--"

He stopped abruptly. Mr. Connolly was kneeling at the bedside, and his two sons knelt to the right and left of him.

There were no family prayers at Lisnahoe; only the ladies were regular church-goers; but that it was a religious household no one could have doubted who knew the events of the night and saw the old man on his knees between his boys.

They rose at the noise of Harold's entrance, and the American, who felt that there were no moments to be wasted on apologies, announced his errand.

"Old Peter Dwyer is a traitor! He has gone out and brought the murderers to finish the work they have commenced."

And then, in eager, breathless words, he told them how he had heard the conversation in the shrubbery, and how the men, apprehensive that Miss Connolly could identify them, had returned to stifle her testimony.

"They were right there," said the old man. "She saw the first blow, and it was struck by Red Mike Driscoll."

"Then she is better?" asked Harold, eagerly.

The boys were at the other end of the room, slipping cartridges loaded with small shot into the fowling-pieces they had snatched from the walls.

"Oh yes," replied Mr. Connolly; "she is all right now."

A sound of heavy blows echoed through the house. The men below had convinced themselves that the door was firmly fastened, and, desperate from the conviction that they were identified, and relying on the loneliness of the place, they were attacking the barrier with a pickaxe.

"I'll soon put a stop to that," cried Jack; and cocking his gun, he left the room.

Dick was about to follow, but his father stopped him.

There's no one in front of the house yet," said the old gentleman. "Slip out quietly, my boy, and make a dash for it to the police station. You've taken the cup for the two-mile race at Trinity. Let's see how quick you can be when you are running for all our lives."

"I'll go down and fasten the door after him," volunteered Hayes, and the old man nodded. Outside, on the landing, they could hear the blows of the pickaxe more distinctly. Suddenly, above the clangour, rang out close and sharp the two reports of Jack's double-barrel. He had selected a window commanding the attack, and had fired point-blank down into the group of men.

Shrieks and groans and curses testified to the accuracy of the young man's aim, and the sound of blows ceased. Harold and Dick ran rapidly downstairs. The latter unbarred the front door.

"Don't you run a fearful risk if you are seen?" inquired the American.

"Of course I do," returned the brave lad, without a tremor in his voice; "but somebody's got to take the chance; we can't defend the house forever; and I wouldn't miss this opportunity of nabbing the whole gang for a thousand pounds."

He opened the door and sped out into the night. He was out of sight in a moment, and, as far as Harold could judge, he had not been observed. Again the blows of the pickaxe rang out from the rear of the house.

Hayes closed the door and replaced the heavy bar. Then he turned to remount the stairs, and met Polly, who was standing near the top with a candle in her hand.

She was quite composed now, but very pale. He tried to ask if she had recovered, but she cut him short impatiently.

"There is nothing the matter with me. What is the meaning of all this uproar and--and the firing?"

For at this moment the twin reports of Jack's breech-loader again echoed through the house, this time it was answered by a fusilade from below.

There was nothing to be gained by concealment, and Harold told her the whole story in a few words.

"How prompt and clever of you!" she said; "You have saved all our lives."

Her praise was very sweet to him, but there was no time to enjoy it now.

"Where are you going?" she asked, as he turned again to spring up

the stairs.

I am going to my room for my revolver," he answered. "I may have use for it before this is over."

"Do," she replied. "I will wait for you here." Haves hurried on.

Jack was in the guest's room. The young Irishman had selected that window, as it commanded the little door against which the brunt of the attack had hitherto been directed. Every pane was shattered, and walls and ceiling showed the effect of the volley that had been directed against him, but the young fellow stood his ground uninjured. "Don't mind me," he said, in answer to Harold's inquiry. "I'm all right, and can hold this fort til morning if they don't get ladders. I fancy I've sickened them of trying that door below."

Harold hastily grasped his revolver and went His idea was to stand in the passage near the smoking-room, and defend the place should the door give way; for he did not believe that timber had ever been grown to withstand such blows.

Mrs. Connolly put her head out of the nursery door as he passed. Her husband had told her of the position of affairs.

"Is that you, Mr. Hayes?" she whispered. "Is Jack hurt?"

"Jack is quite safe," answered the young American. "Are the children very much frightened?"

"Not as long as I am with them," the old lady answered. "And Dick--what of him?"

"Dick is all right too," replied Harold. He could not tell the poor woman that her boy was out in the open country without a wall between him and the ruffians.

Mrs. Connolly drew back into the nursery to take the post assigned her--assuredly not the easiest on that terrible night--to listen to the doubtful sounds from without, and to support, by her own constancy, the courage of her children.

Harold found Miss Connolly in the hall where he had left her.

"What do you intend to do?" she asked.

"I was going to stand inside the door they have been hammering at," he answered, "in case they should break it in."

"Papa is there," said the girl; "perhaps you had better wait here. They will try the front door next"

"Very good," he assented; and then added, with a sudden apprehension, "but the windows. There are so many of them. How can we watch them all?"

"There are bars to all the lower windows," she replied, "and I do not think they know where to find ladders. No; their next attempt will be at the hall door, and it will be harder to repel than anywhere else, for the portico will protect them from shots from

the windows."

"And now, Miss Connolly," urged Harold, "you can do no good here. Had not you better go upstairs out of the way?"

"No, no; I would rather wait here," she answered. "Don't be afraid. I sha'n't give way again as I did to-night. I don't know what came over me, but it was all so horrible--so unexpected--" She broke off with a little shuddering sigh.

"You saw them attack him?" asked Harold.

She nodded. "I was under that big cedar outside the parlor window. I had hidden there to blow the horn. Suddenly I saw Fergus with a lantern in his hand coming full speed toward the house. Just as he got within a few paces of me, half a dozen men burst out from the laurels. Oh, how savagely they struck at him! He was down in a moment. It was all so close to me: I recognised Red Mike by the light of poor Fergus's lantern."

"And then?" asked Hayes.

"I don't think I remember any more. I must have staggered on to the house, for they tell me I was found at the foot of the steps, but I don't know how I got there. I was terribly frightened, but I sha'n't do it again--not if they blow the roof off," she said, trying to smile.

"I should think they would be afraid to persevere now that they are discovered," observed Harold. "This firing must alarm the neighbourhood."

"In a lonely place like this!" said the girl. "No, no, Mr. Hayes; there are not many to hear these shots, and none that would not sooner fight against us than on our side. We must depend on ourselves. But oh," she wailed, her woman's heart betraying itself through the mechanical calm she had maintained so long, "oh, I am sorry that your friendship for us should have brought you into such peril--to think that your visit here may cost you your life," and she broke off and covered her streaming eyes with her hands.

"Indeed, indeed," said Harold, earnestly, "I think any danger I may run a small price to pay for the privilege of knowing you, and, and--of loving you."

It was out at last; the words that had been so difficult to say came trippingly from his tongue now, and she did not repulse nor attempt to licence him.

There, in the dimly lighted, lofty hall, he poured out all that had been in his heart since he had known her, and won from her in return a whisper that emboldened him to draw the yielding form toward him and press his lips to hers.

With a pealing crash the pickaxe bit into the stout oaken door, and the young lovers sprang apart, terrified at this rude interruption of dreams. Blow followed blow, and the massive woodwork shivered and splintered and swayed under the savage impulse from without.

The assailants had abandoned their attempt on the postern; they had ignored the kitchen door, within which stout Tom Neil with Dick's double-barrel stood on guard; they had turned their attention to the main entrance, where a projecting portico partially sheltered them from the galling discharges of Jack's favourite "Rigby."

They were only partially sheltered, however. The heir of Lisnahoe had quickly shifted his ground when the attack on the postern was abandoned, and he now stood in another room, ready, with the quickness of a practised snipe-shot, to fire on any arm or hand or foot which showed even for an instant outside the shadow of the portico.

Crash, crash, crash! Again and again the steel fangs of the pick ate their way through the solid timber. The lock yielded quickly, but, heavily barred at top and bottom, the good door resisted staunchly. Polly had glided away from Harold's side. He fancied that she had sought a place of safety, and rejoiced thereat; but in a moment she reappeared. She carried a shot-gun in her hands, and when she reached his side she rested the butt on the ground and leaned on the weapon.

"I have often fired at things," she said, simply. "Why shouldn't I now?"

Mr. Connolly and Jack joined them in the hall, and Neil had come up from the kitchen door. The main entrance was evidently the weak point, and the whole garrison must be on hand to defend it. The assailants had waxed cautious of late, and for some time had allowed the sharp-shooter no chance. He thought that he would be of more service below; but, as it proved, when he abandoned his post he committed a fatal error.

Apparently the enemy had discovered that the galling fire from above had ceased. Perhaps some of their number had ventured out and returned scatheless. They speedily took advantage of this immunity. While the attacks with the pickaxe were not relaxed for a moment, a score of men had brought the trunk of a young larch from the saw-pit at the back of the house. Poised by forty strong arms, this improvised battering-ram was hurled against the front door, carrying it clear off its hinges. In the naked entry a crowd of rough men jostled one another, as they sprang forward with hoarse imprecations on their prey. The garrison was vanquished at last.

Not yet. Four shots rang out as one, instantly repeated as the defenders discharged their second barrels into the very teeth of the advancing mob. Then Mr. Connolly, Neil, and Jack clubbed the guns they had no time to reload, and prepared to sell their lives dearly in a hand-to-hand struggle. Polly, as soon as she had fired, dropped her weapon, and in an instant Harold had swept her behind him, and stood, revolver in hand, his breast her bulwark, confronting the mob.

But the mob, withered by the volley, hesitated a moment. The vestibule was streaming with blood, and shrieking, writhing victims strove in vain to rise. It was a sickening sight, but there was the electricity of anger in the air and no one faltered long. On they came again with undiminished fury.

But again the rush was checked. Sharp and vengeful rang out the close reports of the American revolver, and at each echo a man fell. Less noisy, less terrific, but far more deadly, the six-shooter took up the work where the breech-loaders had left it; and Harold, covering with his body the girl he loved, fired as steadily as if practising in a pistol gallery, and made every shot tell.

He had not used his weapon in the first rush; somewhere or other, young Hayes had heard of the advantages of platoon firing.

The lights had been extinguished and day was just breaking. Firing from the obscurity into the growing light, the garrison had the best of the position; but there were firearms among the assailants too, and the balls whistled through the long hall and buried themselves in the panelling.

But this could not last. Much as they had suffered in the assault, the assailants were too numerous to be longer held at bay. With a feeling of despair, Harold recognised the futile click that followed his pressure on the trigger and told him that he had fired his last cartridge.

With a wild yell the assailants rushed forward. Not a shot met them; nothing stood between them and their vengeance but four pale, determined men, weaponless but unflinching.

A quick trampling as of a body of horse was heard on the gravel without. A sharp, stern order reached the ears even of those in the house.

"Unsling carbines! Make ready! Present!"

Clubs and blunderbusses dropped from nerveless hands as the advancing mob paused, faltered, and then surged backward through the doorway. The lust of vengeance gave way to the instinct of self-preservation, and the rioters scattered in flight.

Dick's gallant race against time had not been fruitless. A squadron of constabulary had reached the ground at the critical moment, and Lisnahoe was saved.

Few of the assailants escaped--every avenue was guarded by mounted policemen; and the gang which had long terrorised the neighbourhood--whose teachings and example had done so much to convert the sullen discontent of the peasantry into overt violence--was effectually broken up. From that night the boycott on the Connolly household was raised.

Red Mike Driscoll expiated on the gallows the murder of the Emergency man Fergus, and nearly a score of others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment for assault and housebreaking.

The attacking party had lost three men killed, besides many wounded, more or less severely, by the shot-guns. The judicial inquiry into the casualties brought out details of the defence which struck terror to the hearts of the country people. It was not likely that Lisnahoe would be molested again.

Harold Hayes and Polly Connolly were married shortly after Easter.

They are living in New York now, in a pleasant flat overlooking Central Park. They entertain a good deal, and Irish affairs are sometimes discussed at Mr. Hayes's table; but so far he has failed to convince any of his American friends that there may be more than one side to the agrarian question in Ireland.

"Nonsense," remarked one gentleman, who professed to be deeply read in the subject; "they are an oppressed and suffering people. Let them have their land."

"And what is to become of the landlords?" inquired Polly, with a wistful remembrance of her girlhood's beautiful home.

But to this question there has been no reply, and none has been offered yet.

A LOST RECRUIT

BY JANE BARLOW

When Mick Doherty heard that there was to be route-marching next day in the neighbourhood of Kilmacrone, he determined upon going off for a long "stravade" coastward over the bog, where there were no roads worth mentioning, and no risks of an encounter with the military. In this he acted differently from all his neighbours, most of whom, upon learning the news, began to speculate and plan how they might see and hear as much as possible of their unwonted visitors. Opinions were chiefly divided as to whether the Murghadeen cross-roads would be the best station to take up, or the fork of the lane at Berrisbawn House. People who, for one reason or another, could not go so far afield, consoled themselves by reflecting that the band, at any rate, would be likely to come through the village, and would no doubt strike up a tune while passing, as it had done a couple of years ago, the last time the redcoats had appeared in Kilmacrone. And, och, but that was the grand playin' intirely! It done your heart good just to be hearin' the sound of it, bedad it did so. Old Mrs. Geoghegan said it was liker the sort of thunder-storms they might be apt to have in heaven above than aught else she could think of, might goodness forgive her for sayin' such a thing; and Molly Joyce said she'd as lief as not have sat down and cried when't was passed beyond her listenin', it went that delightful thumpety-thump, wid the tune flyin' up over it.

The military authorities at Fortbrack were not ignorant of this popular sentiment, and had considered it in the order of that day. For experience had shown that a progress of troops through the surrounding country districts generally conduced to the appearance before the recruiting officer of sundry long-limbed, loose-jointed Pats, Micks, and Joes; and a recent scarcity of this raw material made it seem expedient to bring such an influence to bear upon the

new ground of remote Kilmacrone. Certain brigades and squadrons were accordingly directed to move thitherward, under the general idea that an invading force from the southeast had occupied Ballybeg Allan, while in pursuance of another general idea, really more to the purpose, though not officially announced, the accompanying band received instructions to be liberal and lively in its performances by the way.

All along their route through the wide brown land the soldiers might be sure of drawing as much sympathetic attention as that lonesome west country could concentrate on any given line. Probably there would be no one disposed, like Mick Doherty, to get out of the way, unless some very small child roared and ran, if of a size to have acquired the latter accomplishment, at the sound of the booming drums. To the great majority of these onlookers the spectacle would be a rare and gorgeous pageant, a memory resplendent across twilight-hued time-tracts as a vision of scarlet and golden gleams, and proudly pacing horses, and music that made you feel you had never known how much life there was in you all the while. Some toll, it is true, had to be paid for this enjoyment. When it had passed by things suddenly grew very flat and colourless, and there was a tendency to feel more or less vaguely aggrieved because you could not go a-soldiering yourself. In cases, however, where circumstances rendered that obviously impossible, as when people were too old or infirm, or were women or girls, this thrill of discontent, seldom very acute, soon subsided, by virtue of the self-preserving instinct which forbids us to persist in knocking our heads hard against our stone walls. But it was different where the beholder was so situated that he could imagine himself riding or striding after the rapturous march-music to fields of peril and valour and glory, without diminishing the vividness of the picture by simultaneously supposing himself some quite other person. The gleam in young Felix M'Guinness's eyes, as he watched the red files dwindle and twinkle out of sight, was to the brightening up beneath his grandfather's shaggy brows as the forked flash is to the shimmering sheet-lightnings, that are but a harmless reflection from far-off storms. And there, indeed, pleasure paid a ruinous duty. If those who were liable to it did not imitate Mick Doherty's prudence and hold aloof, the reason may have been that they had not fortitude enough to turn away from excitement offered on any terms, or that their position was less desperately tantalising than his; and the latter explanation is the more probable one, since few lads in and about Kilmacrone can have had their martial aspirations baulked by an impediment so flimsy and yet so effectual.

There was nothing in the world to hinder Mick from enlisting except just the unreasonableness of his mother, and that was an unreasonableness so unreasonable as to verge upon hat her neighbours would hare called "quare ould conthrariness." For, though a widow woman, and therefore entitled to occupy a pathetic position, its privileges were defined by the opinion that "she was not so badly off intirely as she might ha' been." Mick's departure need not have left her desolate, since she had another son and daughter at home, besides Essie married in the village, and Brian settled down at Murghadeen, here he was doing well, and times and again asking her to come and live with him. Then Mick would have been able to help her out of his pay much more efficaciously than he could do by his earnings at Kilmacrone, where work was slack and its wage low, so that the result of a lad's daily labour sometimes seemed

mainly the putting of a fine edge on a superfluous appetite. All these points were most clearly seen by Mick in the light of a fiercely burning desire; but that availed him nothing unless he could set them as plainly before some one else who was not thus illuminated. And not far from two years back he had resolved that he would attempt to do so no more.

The soldiers had been about in the district on the day before, scattered like poppy beds over the bog, and signalling and firing till the misty October air tingled with excitement. When you have lived your life among wide-bounded solitudes, where the silence is oftenest broken by the plover's pipe or the croak of some heavily flapping bird, you will know the meaning of a bugle-call. Mick and his contemporaries had acted as camp-followers from early till late with ever intensifying ardour; one outcome whereof was that he heard his especial crony, Paddy Joyce, definitely decide to go and enlist at Fortbrack next Monday, which gave a turn more to the pinching screw of his own banned wish. It was with a concerted scheme for ascertaining whether there were any chance of bringing his mother round to a rational view of the matter that he and his friend dropped into her cabin next morning on the way to carry up a load of turf. Mrs. Doherty was washing her couple of blue-checked aprons in an old brown butter-crock, and Mick thought he had introduced the subject rather happily when he told her "she had a right to be takin' her hands out of the suds, and dippin' the finest curtsey she could conthrive, and she wid the Commander-in-Gineral of the Army Forces steppin' in to pay her a visit." Of course this statement required, as it was intended to require, elucidation, so Mick proceeded to announce: "It's himself's off to Fortbrack a-Monday, 'listin' he'll be in the Edenderry Light Infantry; so the next time we set eyes on him it's blazin' along the street we'll see him, like the boys we had here yisterday."

"Ah! sure now, that'll be grand," said Mrs. Doherty, unwarily complaisant; "we'll all be proud to behold him that way. 'T is a fine thing far any young man who's got a fancy to take up wid it."

"Och, then, bedad it is so!" said Mick, with emphasis, promptly making for the opening given to him.

"Bedad it is," said Paddy.

"There's nothin' like it," said Mick.

"Ah, nothin' at all," said Paddy.

Mrs. Doherty made no remark as she twisted a dripping apron into a sausage-shaped roll to wring the water out.

"How much was it you were sayin' you'd have in the week, Paddy, just to put in your pocket for your divarsion like?" inquired Mick, with a convenient lapse of memory.

"Och, seven or eight shillin's anyway," said Paddy, in the tone of one to whom shillings had already become trivial coins; "and that, mind you, after you've ped for the best of aitin' and dhrinkin', and your kit free, and no call to be spendin' another penny unless you plase. Sure, Long Murphy was tellin' me he was up in the town awhile ago, on a day when they were just after gettin' their pay,

and he said the Post-Office was that thick wid the soldier lads sendin' home the money to their friends, he couldn't get speech of a clerk to buy his stamp be no manner of manes, not if he'd wrecked the place. 'T was the Sidmouth Fusileers was in at that time; they're off to Limerick now."

"But that's a grand regulation they have," said Mick, "wid the short service nowadays. Where's the hardship in it when a man can quit at the ind of three year, if he's so plased? Three year's no time to speak of."

"Sure, not at all; you'd scarce notice it passin' by. Like Barney Bralligan's song that finished before it begun--isn't that the way of it, ma'am?"

"It's a goodish len'th of a while," said Mrs. Doherty.

"But thin there's the lave; don't be forgettin' the lave, Paddy man. Supposin' we--"

"Tub be sure, there's the lave. Why, it's skytin' home on lave they do be most continial. And the Edenderrys is movin' no farther than just to Athlone; that's as handy a place as you could get."

"You'd not thravel from this to Athlone in the inside of a week, if it was iver so handy," said Mrs. Doherty.

"Is it a week? Och! blathershins, Mrs. Doherty, ma'am, you're mistook intirely. Sure, onst you've stepped into the town yonder, the train'll take you there in a flash. And the trains do be oncommon convenient."

"Free passes!" prompted Mick.

"Ay, bedad, and free passes they'll give to any souldier takin' his furlough; so sorra the expense 't would be supposin' Mick here had a notion to slip home of an odd day and see you."

"MICK!" said Mrs. Doherty.

"Och well, I was just supposin'. But I'm tould" --the many remarkable facts which Paddy had been tould lost nothing in repetition--"that they'll sometimes have out a special train for a man in the army, if he wants to go anywhere partic'lar in a hurry; there's iligance for you. And as for promotion, it's that plinty you'll scarce git time to remimber your rank from one day to the next, whether it's a full private you are, or a lance-corporal, or maybe somethin' greater. Troth, there's nothin' a man mayn't rise to. And then, Mrs. Doherty, it's the proud woman you'd be--ANYBODY'D be--that they hadn't stood in the way of it. And pensions--he might be pensioned off wid as much as a couple of shillin's a day."

"Not this long while yet, plase the pigs," broke out Mick, squaring his shoulders, as if Time were a visible antagonist, and momentarily forgetting the matter immediately in hand. "But there's chances in it--splendid--och, it's somethin' you may call livin'."

"And," said his friend, "the rations, I'm tould, is surprisin' these times. The top of everythin' that's to be got, uncooked, widout

bone."

Paddy and Mick discoursed for a good while in this strain about the dignities and amenities of a military life, and Mrs. Doherty had not much to say on the subject. During the conversation, however, she continued to rinse one of her aprons, and wring it dry very carefully, and drop it back into the water, like a machine slightly out of gear, which goes on repeating some process ineffectually. The two friends read in her silence an omen of acquiescent conviction, and congratulated each other upon it with furtive nods and winks. Mick went off to the bog in high feather, believing that the interview had been a great success, and that his mother was, as Paddy put it, "comin' round to the notion gradual, like an ould goat grazin' round its tetherin' stump." His hopes, indeed, were so completely in the ascendant that he summed up his most serious uneasiness when he said to himself: "She'll do right enough, no fear, or I'd niver think of it, if Thady was just somethin' steadier. But sure he might happen to git a thrifle more wit yet; he's no great age to spake of."

But when he came home about sunsetting, his mother was feeding her few hens outside their cabin, the end one of a mossy-roofed row, with its door turned at right angles to the others, looking out across the purple brown of the bog-land to the far-off hills, faint, like a blue mist with a waved pattern in it, against the horizon. Mick, brought up short by the group, woke out of his walking dream, in which he had been performing acts of valour to the tune of the "Soldier's Chorus" in Gounod's Faust, the last thing the band had played yesterday; and he noticed a diminution in the select circle of fowls, who crooned and crawked and pecked round the broken dish of scraps.

"I see the specklety pullet's after strayin' on you agin," he said; "herself's the conthrary little bein'; I must take a look about for her prisintly."

"Ah, sure she's sold," said his mother; "it's too many I had altogether. I was torminted thryin' to git feedin' for them. So I sold her this mornin' to Mrs. Dunne at Loughmore, that gave me a fine price for her. 'Deed she'd have took her off of me this while back, on'y I'd just a sort of notion agin' partin' from the crathur. But be comin' in to your supper, child alive; it's ready waitin' this good while. Molly's below at her sister's, and I dunno were Thady's off to, so there's on'y you and me in it to-night."

In the room the more familiar odour of turf-smoke was overborne by a crisp smell of baking, and Mrs. Doherty picked up a steaming plate which had been keeping warm on the hearth. "Isn't that somethin' like, now?" she said, setting it on the table triumphantly. "Rale grand they turned out this time, niver a scorch on the whole of them. I was afeard me hand might maybe ha' got out o' mixin' them,'t is so long since I had e'er a one for you; but sure I bought a half-stone of seconds wid the price of the little hin, and that'll make a good few, so it will, jewel avic, and then we must see after some more. Take one of the thick bits, honey."

Probably most of us have had experience of the unceremonious methods which Fate often chooses when communicating to us important arrangements. We have seen by what a little seeming triviality

of an incident she may intimate that our cherished hope has been struck dead, or that the execution of some other decree has turned the current of our life away. It is sometimes as if she contemptuously sent us a grotesque and dwarfish messenger, who makes grimaces at us while telling us the bad news, which is ungenerous and scarcely dignified. So we need not wonder if Mick Doherty had to read the death-warrant of his darling ambition in a pile of three-cornered griddle-cakes. At any rate, he did read it there swiftly as clearly. Most likely he knew it all before the plate was set on the table, and his heart had already gone down with a run when he replied to his mother's commendations that they looked first-rate. As he indorsed this praise with what appetite he could, being, indeed, mechanically hungry, the uppermost thought in his mind was how he should at once let his mother understand that she had got the price she hoped for her pet hen; and after considering for a while, he said: "Did you ever notice the quare sort of lane-over the turf-stack out there's takin' on it? I question hadn't we done righter to have took a leveller bit of ground for under it. But I was thinkin' this mornin'"--of what a different subject he had been thinking!--"that next year I'd thry buildin' it agin' the back o' th' ould shed, where there does be ne'er a slant at all."

"Ay, sure that 'ud be grand," said Mrs. Doherty, much more elated than if she had heard of a large fortune; "you couldn't find an iliganter place for it in the width of this world." She felt quite satisfied that her craftily timed treat had dispelled the dreaded danger, which actually was the case in a way. But if Mick would stay at home with her, she was perfectly content to suppose that she came after a griddle-cake in his estimation. Her relief made her unusually talkative; but Mick was reflecting between his answers how he must now tell Paddy Joyce that they were never to be comrades after all.

He went out on this mission immediately after supper. The sun had gone down, and the cold clearness left showed things plainly, yet was not light. In front of the cabin-rows the small children of the place were screeching over their final romp and quarrel, as they did every evening; fowls and goats and pigs were settling down for the night with the squawks and bleats and squeals which also took place every evening; on the brown-hollowed grass-bank between Colgan's and O'Reilly's, old Morissy, the blind fiddler, was feebly scraping and twangling, according to his custom every evening, and, for that matter, all day long. Even the wisps of straw and scraps of paper blowing down the middle of the wide roadway seemed to have whirled over and over and caught in the rough patches of stone just so, as often as the sun had set. Close to the Joyces', Mick met Peter Maclean driving home a brood of ducklings. A broad and burly man, who says "shoo-shoo" to a high-piping cluster of tiny yellow ducks, and flourishes a long willow wand to keep them from straggling out of their compacted trot, does undoubtedly present rather an absurd appearance; yet I cannot explain why the sight should have seemed to prick like a sting through the wide weary disgust which Mick experienced as he stood in the twilit boreen waiting for Paddy to come out. He had scarcely a grunt to exchange for Peter's cheerful "Fine evenin'." What does it signify in a universal desert whether evenings be fine or foul? Altogether, it was a bad time; and Mick acted wisely in taking precautions against its recurrence, especially as the obstacles which had confronted him nearly two years back were now more hope-baffling than ever.

For the intervening months had not brought the desirable "thrifle more wit" to his unsteady brother Thady, who, on the contrary, was developing into one of those people whose good-for-nothingness is taken as a matter of course even by themselves; and a bolt was thus, so to speak, drawn across Mick's locked door.

He set off betimes on his long ramble. It was a cloudless July morning--the noon of summer by air and light as well as by the calendar. Even the barest tracts of the bog-land, which vary their aspect as little as may be from shifting season to season, were flecked with golden furze-blossom, and whitened with streaming tufts of fairy-cotton, and sun-warmed herbs were fragrant underfoot. Mick rather hurried over this stage of his "stravade," partly because he foresaw a blazing hot day, and he wished to be among more broken ground, where there are sheltered hollows scooped in the "knockawns," and cool patches under their bushes and boulders. He entered the region of these things before his shadow had shrunk to its briefest; for not so very far beyond Kilmacrone the smooth floor of the big bog crumples itself into crusts and ridges, as if it had caught the trick from its bounding ocean; and the nearer it comes to the shore the higher it heaves itself, until at last it is cut short by a sheer cliff wall, with storm-stunted brambles and furzes cowering along the edge, fathoms above a base-line of exuberant weed and foam. The long sea-frontage of this rock-rampart is fissured by only a few narrow clefts. On the left hand, facing oceanward, the coast is a labyrinth of mountain fiords, straits, and bays, where you may see great craggy shoulders and domed summits waver in their crystal calm at the flick of a gull's dipping wing, or add to the terror of the tempest as they start out black and unmoved behind rifts of swirling mists. On the right there is the same fretwork of land and water, but wrought in less high relief--a tract of lonely strands, where shells and daisies whiten the grass, and pink-belled creepers trail, entangled with tawny-podded wrack, across the shingle. You are apt thereabouts to happen on clattering pebble-banks and curling foam when you are apparently deep among meadows and corn-land, or to come on sturdy green potato-drills round some corner where you had confidently supposed the unstable furrows of the sea. And the intricate ground-plan of the district must be long studied before you can always feel sure whether the low-shelving swarded edges by which you are walking frame salt or fresh water.

Mick was bound eventually for one of those ravines which cleave the cliffs' precipitous wall and give access to the shore, generally by a deep-sunken sandy boreen. Here, under a tall bank, there are a couple of cabins, besides another which, having lost its roof, may be reckoned as a half; so that Tullykillagin is not a large place, even as places go in its neighbourhood. He knew, however, that he could count upon getting something to eat at either of the two cabins first mentioned, and, indeed, at the bare-raftered one also, if, as often chanced, it was occupied by Tim Fottrel, the gatheremup; and this pro

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