

LITERATURE, &c.

New Works.

From the Confessions of Con. Cregan, the Irish Gil Blas.

THE WILL.

THERE was nobody of the rank of gentry in the parish, nor even 'squireen;' the richest being a farmer, a snug old fellow, one Harry McCabe, that had two sons, who were always fighting among themselves which was to have the old man's money. Peter, the elder, doing everything to injure Mat., and Mat. never backward in paying off the obligation. At last, Mat., tired out in the struggle, resolved he would hear no more. He took leave of his father one night, and next day set off for Dublin, and 'listed in the 'Buff.' Three weeks after, he sailed for India; and the old man, overwhelmed by grief, took to his bed, and never arose from it after.

Not that his death was any way sudden, for he lingered on for months long; Peter always teasing him to make his will, and be revenged on 'the dirty spalpeen' that disgraced the family; but old Harry as stoutly resisting, and declaring that whatever he owned should be fairly divided between them.

These disputes between them were well known in the neighborhood. Few of the country people passing the house at night but had overheard the old man's weak reedy voice, and Peter's deep hoarse one, in altercation. When at last—it was on a Sunday night—all was still and quiet in the house; not a word, not a foot-step, could be heard, no more than if it were uninhabited, the neighbors looked knowingly at each other, and wondered if the old man was worse—if he were dead!

It was a little after midnight that a knock came to the door of our cabin. I heard it first, for I used to sleep in a snug little basket near the fire; but I didn't speak, for I was frightened. It was repeated still louder, and then came a cry—'Con, Cregan; Con, I say, open the door! I want you.' I knew the voice well; it was Peter McCabe's; but I pretended to be fast asleep, and snored loudly. At last my father unbolted the door, and I heard him say, 'Oh, Mr Peter, what's the matter? is the old man worse?'

'Faix that's what he is; for he's dead! Glory be his bed! when did it happen? About an hour ago,' said Peter, in a voice that even I, from my corner, could perceive was greatly agitated. 'He died like an old hay-hen, Con., and never made a will.'

'That's bad,' said my father, for he was always a polite man, and said whatever was pleasing to the company. 'It is bad,' said Peter; but it would be worse if we couldn't help it. Listen to me now, Cony, I want ye to help me in this business; and here's five guineas in gold, if ye do what I bid ye. Ye know that ye were always reckoned the image of my father, and before he was taken ill ye were mistaken for each other every day in the week.'

'Anan!' said my father; for he was getting frightened at the notion, without well knowing why.

'Well, what I want is, for ye to come over to the house, and get into the bed.'

'Not beside the corpse?' said my father, trembling. 'By no means; but by yourself: and you're to pretend to be my father, and that ye want to make yer will before ye die; and then I'll send for the neighbors, and Billy Scanlan, the school-master, and ye'll tell him what to write, laying all the farm and everything to me,—ye understand. And as the neighbors will see ye, and hear yer voice, it will never be believed but it was himself that did it.'

'The room must be very dark,' says my father.

'To be sure it will, but have no fear! Nobody will dare to come nigh the bed; and ye'll only have to make a cross with yer pen under the name.'

'And the priest?' said my father. 'My father quarrelled with him last week about the Easter dues; and Father Tom said he'd not give him the 'rites;' and that's lucky now. Come along now, quick, for ye've no time to lose: it must be all finished before the day breaks.'

My father did not lose much time at his toilet, for he just wrapped his big coat 'round him, and slipping on his brogues, left the house. I sat up in the basket, and listened till they were gone some minutes; and then, in a costume as light as my parent's, set out after them, to watch the course of the adventure. I thought to take a short cut, and be before them; but by bad luck I fell into a bog-hole, and only escaped being drowned by a chance. As it was, when I reached the house, the performance had already begun.

I think I see the whole scene this instant before my eyes, as I sat on a little window with one pane, and that a broken one, and surveyed the proceedings. It was a large room, at one end of which was a bed, and beside it a table, with physic-bottles, and spoons, and tea-cups; a little farther off was another table, at which sat Billy Scanlan, with all manner of writing materials before him. The country people sat two, sometimes three, deep round the walls, all intently eager and anxious for the coming event. Peter himself went from place to place, trying to smother his grief, and occasionally helping the company to whiskey—which was supplied with more than accustomed liberality.

All my consciousness of the deceit and trickery could not deprive the scene of a certain so-

lemnity. The misty distance of the half-lighted room, the highly-wrought expression of the country people's faces, never more intensely excited than at some moment of this kind; the low deep-drawn breathings, unbroken save by a sigh or a sob—the tribute of affectionate sorrow to some lost friend, whose memory was thus forcibly brought back: these, I repeat it, were all so real, that as I looked, a thrilling sense of awe stole over me, and I actually shook with fear.

A low faint cough, from the dark corner where the bed stood, seemed to cause even a deeper stillness; and then in a silence, where the buzzing of a fly could have been heard, my father said, 'Where's Billy Scanlan? I want to make my will?'

'He's here, Father,' said Peter, taking Billy by the hand, and leading him to the bed side. 'Write what I bid ye, Billy, and be quick; for I hav'nt a long time afore me here. I die a good Catholic, though Father O'Rafferty won't give me the 'rites!'

A general chorus of muttered 'Musha, musha,' was now heard through the room; but whether in grief over the sad fate of the dying man, or the unfinching severity of the priest, is hard to say.

'I die in peace with all my neighbours, and all mankind!'

Another chorus of the company seemed to approve these charitable expressions.

'I bequeath unto my son, Peter,—and never was there a better son, or a decenter boy,—have you that done? I bequeath unto my son, Peter, the whole of my two farms of Killimadonery and Knocksheboora, with the fallow meadows behind Lynch's house; the forge, and the right to turf on the Dooran bog. I give him, and much good may it do him, Lanty Cassara's acre, and the Luary field, with the lime-kiln; and that reminds me that my mouth is just as dry; let me taste what ye have in the jug.' Hear the dying man took a very hearty pull, and seemed considerably refreshed by it. 'Where was I, Billy?' said he; 'Oh, I remember, at the lime-kiln; I have him—that's Peter, I mane—the two potato-gardens at Noonan's well; and it's the iligant fine crop grows there.'

'An't you gettin' wake, father darlin'?' says Peter, who began to be afraid of my father's loquaciousness: for, to say the truth, the punch got into his head, and he was greatly disposed to talk.

'I am Peter, my son,' says he; 'I am gettin' wake; just touch my lips again with the jug. Ah Peter, Peter, you watered the drink!'

'No, indeed, father, but it's the taste is lavin' you,' said Peter; and again a low chorus of compassionate pity murmured through the cabin.

'Well, I'm nearly done now,' says my father: 'there's only one little plot of ground remaining; and I put it on you, Peter,—as ye wish to live a good man, and die with the same easy heart as I do now,—that ye mind my last words to ye here. Are ye listening? Are the neighbors listening? Is Billy Scanlan listening?'

'Yes, sir. Yes, father. We're all minding,' chorused the audience.

'Well, then, it's my last will and testament, and may—give me over the jug,—here he took a long drink—and may that blessed liquor be poison to me if I'm not as eager about this as every other part of my will; I say then, I bequeath the little plot at the cross-roads to poor Con. Cregan; for he has a heavy charge, and is as honest and as hard-working a man as ever I knew. Be a friend to him, Peter, dear; never let him want while ye have it yourself; think on me on my deathbed whenever he asks ye for any trifle. Is it down, Billy Scanlan? the two acres at the cross to Con. Cregan and his heirs, in *secla sectorum*. Ah, blessed be the Saints! but I feel my heart lighter after that,' says he, 'a good work makes an easy conscience; and now I'll drink all the company's good health, and many happy returns—'

'What he was going to add, there's no saying; but Peter, who was now terribly frightened at the living tone the sick man was assuming, hurried all the people away into another room, to let his father die in peace.

When they were all gone, Peter slipped back to my father, who was putting on his brogues in a corner: 'Con.,' says he, 'ye did it all well: but sure that was a joke about the two acres at the cross.'

'Of course it was, Peter,' says he: 'sure it was all a joke for the matter of that: won't I make the neighbors laugh to-morrow when I tell them all about it!'

'You wouldn't be mean enough to betray me!' says Peter, trembling with fright.

'Sure ye wouldn't be mean enough to go against yer father's dying words?' says my father: 'the last sentence ever he spoke,' and here he gave a low wicked laugh, that made myself shake with fear.

'Very well, Con.,' says Peter, holding out his hand, 'a bargain's a bargain: yer a deep fellow, that's all! and so it ended: and my father slipped quietly home over the bog, mighty well satisfied with the legacy he left himself.

And thus we become the owners of the little spot known to this day as Con.'s Acre.

THE ORPHAN BOY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'CRUISING IN THE LAST WAR.'

THE bustle of the fight was over; the prisoners had been secured, the decks washed down, the watch piped, and the schooner had once more relapsed into midnight quiet and repose. I sought my hammock and soon fell asleep. But my slumbers were dis-

turbed by wild dreams, which, like the visions of a fever, agitated and unnerved me; the late strife the hardships of my early life, and a thousand other things, mingled together as figures in a phantasmagoria. Suddenly a hand was laid on my shoulder, and starting up I beheld the surgeon's mate. 'Little Dick, Sir, is dying,' he said. At once I sprang from my hammock. Little Dick was a sort of protegee; of mine. He was a pale delicate child, said to be an orphan, and used to gentle nurture; and from the first hour I joined the schooner my heart had yearned towards him, for I too had once been friendless and alone in the world. He often talked to me in confidence of his mother, whose memory he regarded with a holy reverence. With the other boys of the ship he had little to say; for they were rude and coarse, he delicate and sensitive. Often when they jeered him for his melancholy, he would go apart by himself and weep. He never complained of his lot, though his companions imposed on him continually. Poor lad! his heart was in the grave with his lost parents. I took a strange interest in him, and had lightened his tasks as much as possible. During the late fight I had owed my life to him, for he rushed in just as a sabre-cut was levelled at me, and by interposing his cutlas had averted the deadly blow. In the hurry and confusion since, I had forgotten to inquire if he was hurt, though at the time I had inwardly resolved to exert all my little influence to procure him a midshipman's warrant in requital for his service. It was with a pang of reproachful agony, therefore, that I leaped to my feet—'What! I exclaimed, 'you do not mean it? He is not dying?'

'I fear sir,' said the messenger, shaking his head sadly, 'that he cannot live till morning.'

'And I have been lying idly here I exclaimed with remorse, 'lead me to him.'

'He is delirious; but in the intervals of lunacy he asks for you, sir; and as the man spoke we stood by the bedside of the dying boy.

The sufferer did not lie in his usual hammock, for it was hung in the very midst of the crew, and the close air around it was too stifling, but he had been carried under the open hatchway, and laid there in a little open space of about four feet square. From the sound of the ripples I judged the schooner was in motion, while the clear, calm blue sky, seen thro' the opening overhead, and dotted with myriads of stars, betokened that the fog had broken away. How calmly it smiled down on the wan face of the dying boy! Occasionally a light current of wind—oh! how deliciously cool in that pent up hold—edded down the hatchway, and lifted the chestnut locks of the sufferer, as with his little head reposing in the lap of an old veteran, he lay in an unquiet slumber. His shirt-collar was unbuttoned, and his childish bosom, as white as that of a girl, was open and exposed. He breathed quick and feebly. The wound of which he was dying had been intensely painful, but within the last half hour had somewhat lulled, though even now his thin fingers tightly grasped the bed clothes, as if he suffered the greatest agony. A battle-stained and grey haired seaman stood beside him, holding a dull lantern in his hand, and gazing sorrowfully down upon the sufferer. The surgeon knelt with his finger on the boy's pulse. As I approached they all looked up. The veteran who held him shook his head, and would have spoken, but the tears gathered too chokingly in his eyes. The surgeon said, 'He is going fast, poor little fellow! Do you see this?' and as he spoke he lifted up a rich gold locket, which had lain upon the boy's breast. 'Ho has seen better days.'

I could not answer, for my heart was full. Here was the being to whom but a few hours before I had owed my life—a poor, slight, unprotected child—lying before me, with death already written on his brow, and yet I had never known of his danger, and never sought him out after the conflict. How bitterly my heart reproached me in that hour. They noticed my agitation, and his old friend, the seaman that held his head, said sadly, 'Poor little Dick, you'll never see the shore you have wished for so long; but there'll be more than one, when your log's out,—he spoke with emotion—to mourn for you.'

Suddenly the little fellow opened his eye, and gazed vacantly around. 'Has he come yet?' he asked, in a low voice. 'Why don't he come?'

'I am here,' said I taking the little fellow's hand. 'Don't you know me Dick?'

He smiled faintly in my face. Then he said, 'You have been kind to me, sir—kinder than most people are to a poor orphan boy. I have no way to show my gratitude unless you will take the Bible you'll find in my trunk. It's a small offering, I know, but it is all I have.' I burst into tears. He resumed, 'Doctor, I'm dying, ain't I?' said the little fellow 'for my sight grows dim?' God bless you, Mr Danforth.

'Can I do nothing for you, Dick?' said I. 'You saved my life; I would coin my own blood to buy yours?'

'I have nothing to ask—I don't want to live; only, if its possible, let me be buried by my mother. You will find the name of the place and all about it in my trunk.'

'Anything—everything, my poor lad,' I answered chokingly.

The little fellow smiled faintly—it was like an angel's smile—but he did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the stars flickering in that patch of blue sky far overhead. His mind wandered. 'It is a long way up there, but there are bright angels among them. Mother used to say that I would meet her there. How near they come, and I see sweet faces smiling

on me from them. Hark! is that music?' and lifting his finger he seemed listening intently for a moment. He fell back, and the old veteran burst into tears. The child was dead. Did he indeed hear angel's voices? God grant it.

From Tichendorf's Travels.

THE NITRE LAKES OF EGYPT.

In the midst of this sandy waste, where uniformity is rarely interrupted by grass or shrubs, there are extensive districts where nitre springs from the earth like crystallised fruits. One thinks he sees a wild overgrown with moss, weeds and shrubs, thickly covered with hoar frost. And to imagine this wintry scene beneath the fervent heat of an Egyptian sun, will give some idea of the strangeness of its aspect. The existence of this nitre upon the sandy surface is caused by the evaporation of the lakes. According to the quantity of water left behind by the lake do these fantastic shapes assume either a dazzling white colour, or are more or less tinted with the sober hue of the sand. The nitre lakes themselves, six in number, situated in a spacious valley, between two rows of low sand-hills, presented—at least the three which we visited—a pleasing contrast, in their dark blue and red colors, to the dull hues of the sand. The nitre, which forms a thick crystallised crust upon these shallow lakes, is broken off in large square plates, which are either of a dirty white or of a flesh color, or of a deep dark red. The fellahs employed upon this labor stand quite naked in the water, furnished with iron rods. The part which is removed being speedily renewed, the riches of his produce are inexhaustible. It is hence that nearly the whole of Europe is exclusively supplied with nitre, and this has probably been the case for ages; for Sicard mentions it at the commencement of the century, and then 36,000 cwts. were annually broken for the Grand Signor, to whom it yielded thirty six purses. By the side of one of the lakes, piled in large layers, was heaped the produce of last year's labor. My companion had occasion to find fault with the result of the work of one of the villagers: the sheikh of the village stood before us—he sharply rebuked him, and to give greater effect to his words he crossed his naked shoulders two or three times with his whips of elephant's skin. The sheikh sprang as nimbly as a gazelle into the lake, and received his farther instructions beyond arm's length. Such was the impressive discipline which even the Italian, who was a man of gentle manners, considered it necessary to adopt towards these fellahs. The plates of nitre, after undergoing a preliminary cleansing upon the bank of the lake, are carried to the castle, where, by various processes, they become a dazzling white powder, and in this state it is carried in large quantities to Teranneh.

From Sir George Simpson's Works.

THE HABITS OF THE FUR-SEALS.

In the month of May, with something like the regularity of an almanac, the fur seals make their appearance at the island of Saint Paul, one of the Aleutian group. Each old male brings a herd of females under his protection, varying in number according to his size and strength; the weaker brethren are obliged to content themselves with half a dozen wives, while some of the sturdier and fiercer fellows preside over harems that are two hundred strong. From the date of their arrival in May to that of their departure in October, the whole of them are principally ashore on the beach. The females go down to the sea once or twice a day, while the male, morning, noon and night, watches his charge with the utmost jealousy, postponing even the pleasures of eating and drinking and sleeping, to the duty of keeping his favorites together. If any young gallant venture by stealth to approach any senior chief's bevy of beauties, he generally atones for his impudence with his life, being torn to pieces by the old fellow; and such of the fair ones as may have given the intruder any encouragement are pretty sure to be caught in the shape of some secondary punishment. The ladies are in the straw about a fortnight after they arrive at St Paul's; about two or three weeks afterwards they lay the single foundation, being all that is necessary of next season's proceedings; and the remainder of their sojourn they devote exclusively to their young. At last the whole band departs, no one knows whither. The mode of capture is this. At the proper time, the whole are driven, like a flock of sheep, to the establishment, which is about a mile distant from the sea; and there the males of four years, with the exception of a few that are left to keep up the breed, are separated from the rest and killed. In the days of promiscuous massacre, such of the mothers as had lost their pups would ever and anon return to the establishment, absolutely harrowing up the hunter, accustomed as they were to such scenes, and with their doleful lamentations.

From "Sketches of Scotland," by Rev. Robert Turnbull.

A SECOND TROJAN HORSE.

When Robert Bruce was lying in Torwood castle, not far from Falkirk, a man by the name of Binnoch, a farmer in the neighborhood who supplied the garrison of Linlithgow, then in possession of the English king, proposed to Bruce to take possession of the garrison by a stratagem, which he accomplished. This incident had been wrought into a lively form by