

It was the barracks. Here the alarm was also given.

In less than an hour, a mounted troop of police in olive-green costume, with pistols at holster, sword by side, and carbine on the arm, were trotting briskly out of town, accompanied by the two messengers; whom they plied with eager questions. These answered, and sundry imprecations vented, the whole party increased their speed, and went on, mile after mile, by hedgerow and open moorland, talking as they went.

Before they reached the house of Sporeen, and near the village where the two Irish horsemen had stopped the evening before, they halted, and formed themselves into more orderly array. A narrow gully was before them on the road, hemmed in on each side by rocky steepes, here and there overhung with bushes. The commandant bade them be on their guard, for there might be danger there. He was right; for the moment they began to trot through the pass, the flash and rattle of fire-arms from the thickets above saluted them, followed by a wild yell. In a second, several of their number lay dead or dying in the road. The fire was returned promptly by the police; but it was at random, for although another discharge, and another howl, announced that the enemy were still there, no one could be seen. The head of the police commanded his troop to make a dash through the pass; for there was no scaling the heights from this side; the assailants having warily posted themselves there, because at the foot of an eminence were stretched on either hand impassable bogs. The troop dashed forward, firing their pistols as they went; but were met by such deadly discharges of fire-arms as threw them into confusion, killed and wounded several of their horses, and made them hastily retreat.

There was nothing for it, but to await the arrival of the cavalry; and it was not long before the clatter of horses' hoofs and the ringing of sabres were heard on the road. On coming up, the troop of cavalry, firing to the right and left on the hill-sides, dashed forward, and, in the same instant, cleared the gully in safety; the police having kept their side of the pass. In fact, not a single shot was returned; the arrival of this strong force having warned the insurgents to decamp. The cavalry in full charge ascended the hills, to their summits. Not a foe was to be seen, except one or two dying men, who were discovered by their groans.

The moon had been for a time quenched in a dense mass of clouds, which now were blown aside by a keen and cutting wind. The heron, soaring over the desert, could now see gray-coated men flying in different directions to the shelter of the neighboring hills. The next day he was startled from his dreamy reveries near the moorland stream, by the shouts and galloping of mingled police and soldiers, as they gave chase to a couple of haggard, bare-headed, and panting peasants.

These were soon captured, and at once recognized as belonging to the evicted inhabitants of the recently deserted village.

Since then years have rolled on. The heron, who had been startled from his quiet haunts by these things, was still dwelling on the lofty tree with his kindred, by the hall of Sporeen. He had reared family after family in that airy lodgment, as spring after spring came round; but no family, after that fatal time, had ever tenanted the mansion. The widow and children had fled from it so soon as Mr. FitzGibbon had been laid in the grave. The nettle and dock flourished over the scorched ruins of the village of Rathbeg; dank moss and wild grass tangled the proud drives and walks of Sporeen. All the woodland rides and pleasure-grounds lay obstructed with briars; and young trees, in time, grew luxuriantly where once the roller in its rounds could not crush a weed; the nimble frolics of the squirrel were now the only merry things where formerly the feet of lovely children had sprung with elastic joy.

The curse of Ireland was on the place. Landlord and tenant, gentleman and peasant, each with the roots and the shoots of many virtues in their hearts, thrown into a false position by the mutual injuries of ages, had wreaked on each other the miseries sown broadcast by their ancestors. Beneath this foul spell men who would, in any other circumstances, have been the happiest and the noblest of mankind, became tyrants; and peasants, who would have glowed with grateful affection toward them, exulted in being their assassins. As the traveler rode past the decaying hall, the gloomy woods, and waste black moorlands of Sporeen, he read the riddle of Ireland's fate, and asked himself when an *Cædipus* would arise to solve it.

#### SCOTTISH REVENGE.

A LONG time ago, when the powerful clan of the Cumyns were lords of half the country round, the chief of that clan slew a neighboring chieftain, with whom he had a feud; for feuds in those days were as easily found as blackberries, and quarrels might be had any day in the year for the *picking*. He that was slain had, at the time of his death, an only child, an infant, of the name of Hugh. The widow treasured deep within her heart the hope of vengeance, which the daily sight of her son, recalling, by his features, the memory of her slaughtered husband, kept ever awake. With the first opening of his intellect, he was instructed in the deed that made him fatherless, and taught to look forward to avenging his parent as a holy obligation cast upon him; and so, with his strength and his stature, grew his hatred of the Cumyns, and his resolution to take the life of him who had slain his father. He spent his days in the woods practicing archery, till at length he became a most expert bowman. None could send a shaft with so strong an arm, or so true an aim, as Hugh Shenigan; and the eagle or the red deer was sure to fall beneath his arrow, when the one was soaring too high in the air, or the other fleeing too swiftly on the hill, for ordinary woodcraft. But it was not the eagle or the deer that kept

Hugh in the forest, and upon the mountains, from the dawn of the morning till the setting of the sun. He was watching for other prey, and at length chance brought what he sought within his reach. One day he climbed up the side of Benigloe, and took his station upon a spot that commanded a view of the glen between it and the opposite range of hills. He had ascertained that Cumyn would return to Blair by the glen that evening; and so it happened, that an hour or so before sun-fall he espied the chieftain, with two of his clan, wending onwards toward the base of the hill. A few minutes more, and they would reach a point within the range of his bow. His practiced eye measured the distance, and his heart throbbed with a fierce, dark emotion, as he put the shaft to the thong, and drew it, with a strong arm, to his ear. With a whiz, the arrow sped from the bow, and cleft the air with the speed of light, while a wild shout burst from the lips of the young archer. His anxiety, it would seem, did not suffer him to wait till his foe had come within range of his arrow, for it sank quivering into the earth at the foot of him for whose heart it was aimed. The shout and the shaft alike warned the Cumyns that danger was nigh, and not knowing by what numbers they might be assailed, they plunged into the heather on the hill side, and were quickly lost to the sight. But the young man watched with the keenness of an eagle, and his sense seemed intensified with the terrible desire of vengeance that consumed him. At length, just where the little stream falls from the crown of the hill, the form of a man became visible, standing out from the sky, now bright with the last light of the setting sun. With a strong effort, the young man mastered the emotion of his heart, as the gambler becomes calm, ere he throws the cast upon which he has staked his all. The bow is strained to its utmost, the eye ranges along the shaft from feather to barb, it is shot forth as if winged by the very soul of him who impelled it. One moment of breathless suspense, and in the next the chief of the Cumyns falls headlong into the stream, pierced through the bowels by the deadly weapon.

#### POSTAL REFORM.—CHEAP POSTAGE.

IT is now upward of eleven years since the writer of this commenced advocating "postal reform and cheap postage." At first it found but little favor either from the public or the Post-Office Department. Many considered the schemes Utopian, and if carried into effect would break down the post-office: but neither ridicule or threats prevented him from prosecuting his object until Congress was compelled in 1845 to reduce the rates of postage to five and ten cents the half-ounce.

The success attending even this partial reduction equaled the expectations of its friends, and silenced the opposition of its enemies. The friends of cheap postage, in New York and other places, renewed their efforts to obtain a further reduction, and petitioned for a uniform rate of two cents prepaid. But such was either the in-

difference or hostility of a majority of the members that no definite action was taken on the subject for six years, nor was it until the last session that any reduction was made from the rates adopted in 1845. Notwithstanding this shameful delay in complying with the wishes of the people, the new law adopted *four* rates instead of one, leaving the prepayment of postage optional. Besides this, the new law imposes on newspapers and printed matter a most unreasonable, burdensome, and complicated tax, which has created universal dissatisfaction.

The obnoxious features of the present law imperiously demand the immediate attention of Congress. Neither the rates of postage on letters, nor the tax on newspapers and printed matter, meet the wishes of the friends of cheap postage. They have uniformly insisted upon simplicity, uniformity, and cheapness. But the present law possesses none of these requisites. On letters the rates in the United States are three and five, six and ten cents, according to distance. Ocean postage is enormous and too burdensome to be borne any longer. The rates of postage on newspapers are so complicated that few postmasters can tell what they are, and those on transient newspapers and printed matter generally, are so enormous as to amount to a prohibition. A revision of this law is rendered indispensable. Other reforms are required, some of which I shall here notice.

1. Letter postage should be reduced to a uniform rate of *two cents prepaid*. This rate has been successfully adopted in Great Britain. It has increased the letters and the income of the post-office. It is the revenue point, sufficiently low, to encourage the people to write, and to send all their letters through the post-office; and yet high enough to afford ample revenue to pay the expenses of the Department. If this rate is adopted, it will defy all competition, for none will attempt to carry letters cheaper than the post-office.

2. *Ocean postage* is enormous and burdensome, especially upon that class of persons which is least able to bear it. It has been computed by those who are competent to judge, that about three-quarters of the ship letters are written by emigrants, and are letters of friendship and affection. The greater portion of them are from persons in poor circumstances, and to tax them with *twenty-four* or *twenty-nine* cents for a single letter is cruel. To send a letter and receive an answer, will cost a servant girl half a week's wages, and a poor man in the country will have to work a day to earn the value of the postage of a letter to and from his friends in Europe. Were the postage reduced to a low rate, *ten* letters would be written where one now is, and the revenue, in a short period, would be equal if not greater than under the present high rates. During the last twelve months, the amount received for transatlantic postages was not less than *a million of dollars*, and three-fourths of this sum has been paid by the laboring classes on letters relating to their domestic relations and friendship.