

# **The Lianhan Shee**

WILL CARLETON

# Table of Contents

<u>The Lianhan Shee</u> .....	1
<u>WILL CARLETON</u> .....	1

# The Lianhan Shee

WILL CARLETON

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

ONE summer evening Mary Sullivan was sitting at her own well-swept hearthstone, knitting feet to a pair of sheep's-grey stockings for Bartley, her husband. It was one of those serene evenings in the month of June when the decline of day assumes a calmness and repose, resembling what we might suppose to have irradiated Eden when our first parents sat in it before their fall. The beams of the sun shone through the windows in clear shafts of amber light, exhibiting millions of those atoms which float to the naked eye within its mild radiance. The dog lay barking in his dream at her feet, and the grey cat sat purring placidly upon his back, from which even his occasional agitation did not dislodge her.

Mrs Sullivan was the wife of a wealthy farmer, and niece to the Rev. Felix O'Rourke; her kitchen was consequently large, comfortable, and warm. Over where she sat, jutted out the "brace" well lined with bacon; to the right hung a well-scoured salt-box, and to the left was the jamb, with its little paneless window to admit the light. Within it hung several ash rungs, seasoning for flail-sooples, or boulteens, a dozen of eel-skins, and several stripes of horse-skin, as hangings for them. The dresser was a "parfit white," and well furnished with the usual appurtenances. Over the door and on the "threshel" were nailed, "for luck," two horse-shoes, that had been found by accident. In a little "hole" in the wall, beneath the salt-box, lay a bottle of holy water to keep the place purified; and against the copestone of the gable, on the outside, grew a large lump of house-leek, as a specific for sore eyes and other maladies.

In the corner of the garden were a few stalks of tansy "to kill the thievin' worms in the childhre, the crathurs," together with a little Rosenoble, Solomon's Seal, and Bugloss, each for some medicinal purpose. The "lime wather" Mrs Sullivan could make herself, and the "bog bane" for the linh roe, or heartburn, grew in their own meadow-drain; so that, in fact, she had within her reach a very decent pharmacoplia, perhaps as harmless as that of the profession itself. Lying on the top of the salt-box was a bunch of fairy flax, and sewed in the folds of her own scapular was the dust of what had once been a four-leaved shamrock, an invaluable specific "for seein' the good people," if they happened to come within the bounds of vision. Over the door in the inside, over the beds, and over the cattle in the outhouses, were placed branches of withered palm, that had been consecrated by the priest on Palm Sunday; and when the cows happened to calve, this good woman tied, with her own hands, a woollen thread about their tails, to prevent them from being overlooked by evil eyes, or elf-shot by the fairies, who seem to possess a peculiar power over females of every species during the period of parturition. It is unnecessary to mention the variety of charms which she possessed for that obsolete malady the colic, for toothache, headaches, or for removing warts, and taking motes out of the eyes; let it suffice to inform our readers that she was well stocked with them; and, that in addition to this, she, together with her husband, drank a potion made up and administered by an herb-doctor, for preventing for ever the slightest misunderstanding or quarrel between man and wife. Whether it produced this desirable object or not, our readers may conjecture, when we add, that the herb-doctor, after having taken a very liberal advantage of their generosity, was immediately compelled to disappear from the neighbourhood, in order to avoid meeting with Bartley, who had a sharp look-out for him, not exactly on his own account, but "in regard," he said, "that it had no effect upon Mary, at all at all"; whilst Mary, on the other hand, admitted its efficacy upon herself, but maintained, "that Bartley was worse nor ever afther it."

## The Lianhan Shee

Such was Mary Sullivan, as she sat at her own hearth, quite alone, engaged as we have represented her. What she may have been meditating on, we cannot pretend to ascertain; but after some time, she looked sharply into the "backstone," or hob, with an air of anxiety and alarm. By and by she suspended her knitting, and listened with much earnestness, leaning her right ear over to the hob, from whence the sounds to which she paid such deep attention proceeded. At length she crossed herself devoutly, and exclaimed, "Queen of saints about us! is it back ye are? Well sure there's no use in talkin' bekase they say you know what's said of you, or to you an' we may as well spake yez fair. Hem musha yez are welcome back, crickets, avourneenee! I hope that, not like the last visit ye ped us, yez are comin' for luck now! Moolyeen died, any way, soon afther your other kailyee, ye crathurs ye. Here's the bread, an' the salt, an' the male for yez, an' we wish ye well. Eh? saints above, if it isn't listenin' they are jist like a Christhien! Wurrah, but ye are the wise an' the quare crathurs all out!"

She then shook a little holy water over the hob, and muttered to herself an Irish charm or prayer against the evils which crickets are often supposed by the peasantry to bring with them, and requested, still in the words of the charm, that their presence might, on that occasion, rather be a presage of good fortune to man and beast belonging to her.

"There now, ye dhonans ye, sure ye can't say that ye're ill-thrated here, anyhow, or ever was mocked or made game of in the same family. You have got your hansel, an' full an' plenty of it; hopin' at the same time that you'll have no rason in life to cut our best clothes from revinge. Sure an' I didn't deserve to have my brave stuff long body riddled the way it was the last time ye wor here, an' only bekase little Barny, that has but the sinse of a gorsoon, tould yez in a joke to pack off wid yourselves somewhere else. Musha, never heed what the likes of him says; sure he's but a caudy, that doesn't mane ill, only the bit o' divarsion wid yez."

She then resumed her knitting, occasionally stopping, as she changed her needles, to listen, with her ear set, as if she wished to augur from the nature of their chirping, whether they came for good or evil. This, however, seemed to be beyond her faculty of translating their language; for after sagely shaking her head two or three times, she knit more busily than before.

At this moment, the shadow of a person passing the house darkened the window opposite which she sat, and immediately a tall female, of a wild dress and aspect, entered the kitchen.

"Gho manhy dhea ghud, a ban chohr! the blessin' o' goodness upon you, dacent woman," said Mrs Sullivan, addressing her in those kindly phrases so peculiar to the Irish language.

Instead of making her any reply, however, the woman, whose eye glistened with a wild depth of meaning, exclaimed in low tones, apparently of much anguish, "Husht, husht, dherum! husht, husht, I say let me alone I will do it will you husht? I will, I say I will there now that's it be quiet, an' I will do it be quiet!" and as she thus spoke she turned her face back over her left shoulder, as if some invisible being dogged her steps, and stood bending over her.

"Gho manhy dhea ghud, a ban chohr, dherhum areesht! the blessin' o' God on you, honest woman, I say again," said Mrs Sullivan, repeating that sacred form of salutation with which the peasantry address each other. "'Tis a fine evenin', honest woman, glory be to Him that sent the same, and amin! If it was cowld, I'd be axin' you to draw your chair in to the fire; but, any way, won't you sit down?"

As she ceased speaking the piercing eye of the strange woman became riveted on her with a glare, which, whilst it startled Mrs Sullivan, seemed full of an agony that almost abstracted her from external life. It was not, however, so wholly absorbing as to prevent it from expressing a marked interest, whether for good or evil, in the woman who addressed her so hospitably.

## The Lianhan Shee

"Husht, now husht," she said, as if aside "husht, won't you sure I may speak the thing to her you said it there now, husht!" And then fastening her dark eyes on Mrs Sullivan, she smiled bitterly and mysteriously.

"I know you well," she said, without, however, returning the blessing contained in the usual reply to Mrs Sullivan's salutation "I know you well, Mary Sullivan husht, now, husht yes, I know you well, and the power of all that you carry about you; but you'd be better than you are and that's well enough now if you had sense to know ah, ah, ah! what's this!" she exclaimed abruptly, with three distinct shrieks, that seemed to be produced by sensations of sharp and piercing agony.

"In the name of goodness, what's over you, honest woman?" inquired Mrs Sullivan, as she started from her chair, and ran to her in a state of alarm, bordering on terror "Is it sick you are?"

The woman's face had got haggard, and its features distorted; but in a few minutes they resumed their peculiar expression of settled wildness and mystery. "Sick!" she replied, licking her parched lips; "awirck, awirck! look! look!" and she pointed with a shudder that almost convulsed her whole frame, to a lump that rose on her shoulders; this, be it what it might, was covered with a red cloak, closely pinned and tied with great caution about her body "'tis here! I have it!"

"Blessed mother!" exclaimed Mrs Sullivan, tottering over to her chair, as finished a picture of horror as the eye could witness, "this day's Friday: the saints stand betwixt me an' all harm! Oh, holy Mary, protect me! Nhanim an airh," in the name of the Father, etc., and she forthwith proceeded to bless herself, which she did thirteen times in honour of the blessed virgin and the twelve apostles.

"Ay, it's as you see!" replied the stranger bitterly. "It is here husht, now husht, I say I will say the thing to her, mayn't I? Ay, indeed, Mary Sullivan, 'tis with me always always. Well, well, no, I won't I won't easy. Oh, blessed saints, easy, and I won't!"

In the meantime Mrs Sullivan had uncorked her bottle of holy water, and plentifully bedewed herself with it, as a preservative against this mysterious woman and her dreadful secret.

"Blessed mother above!" she ejaculated, "the Lianhan Shee!" And as she spoke, with the holy water in the palm of her hand, she advanced cautiously, and with great terror, to throw it upon the stranger and the unearthly thing she bore.

"Don't attempt it!" shouted the other, in tones of mingled fierceness and terror; "do you want to give me pain without keeping yourself anything at all safer? Don't you know it doesn't care about your holy water? But I'd suffer for it, an' perhaps so would you."

Mrs Sullivan, terrified by the agitated looks of the woman, drew back with affright, and threw the holy water with which she intended to purify the other on her own person.

"Why thin, you lost crathur, who or what are you at all? don't, don't for the sake of all the saints and angels of heaven, don't come next or near me keep your distance but what are you, or how did you come to get that 'good thing' you carry about wid you?"

"Ay, indeed!" replied the woman bitterly, "as if I would or could tell you that! I say, you woman, you're doing what's not right in asking me a question you ought not let to cross your lips look to yourself, and what's over you."

The simple woman, thinking her meaning literal, almost leaped off her seat with terror, and turned up her eyes to ascertain whether or not any dreadful appearance had approached her, or hung over her where she sat.

## The Lianhan Shee

"Woman," said she, "I spoke you kind an' fair, an' I wish you well but "

"But what?" replied the other and her eyes kindled into deep and profound excitement, apparently upon very slight grounds.

"Why hem nothin' at all sure, only "

"Only what?" asked the stranger, with a face of anguish that seemed to torture every feature out of its proper lineaments.

"Dacent woman," said Mrs Sullivan, whilst the hair began to stand with terror upon her head, "sure it's no wondher in life that I'm in a perplexity, whin a Lianhan Shee is undher the one roof wid me. 'Tisn't that I want to know anything at all about it the dear forbid I should; but I never hard of a person bein' tormented wid it as you are. I always used to hear the people say that it thrated its friends well."

"Husht!" said the woman, looking wildly over her shoulder, "I'll not tell: it's on myself I'll leave the blame! Why, will you never pity me? Am I to be night and day tormented? Oh, you're wicked and cruel for no reason!"

"Thry," said Mrs Sullivan, "an' bless yourself; call on God."

"Ah!" shouted the other, "are you going to get me killed?" and as she uttered the words, a spasmodic working which must have occasioned great pain, even to torture, became audible in her throat; her bosom heaved up and down, and her head was bent repeatedly on her breast, as if by force.

"Don't mention that name," said she, "in my presence, except you mean to drive me to utter distraction. I mean," she continued, after considerable effort to recover her former tone and manner "hear me with attention I mean, woman you, Mary Sullivan that if you mention that holy name, you might as well keep plunging sharp knives into my heart! Husht! peace to me for one minute, tormentor! Spare me something, I'm in your power!"

"Will you ate anything?" said Mrs Sullivan; "poor crathur, you look like hunger an' distress; there's enough in the house, blessed be them that sent it! an' you had bethter thry an' take some nourishment, any way"; and she raised her eyes in a silent prayer of relief and ease for the unhappy woman, whose unhallowed association had, in her opinion, sealed her doom.

"Will I? will I? oh!" she replied, "may you never know misery for offering it! Oh, bring me something some refreshment some food for I'm dying with hunger."

Mrs Sullivan, who, with all her superstition, was remarkable for charity and benevolence, immediately placed food and drink before her, which the stranger absolutely devoured taking care occasionally to secrete under the protuberance which appeared behind her neck, a portion of what she ate. This, however, she did, not by stealth, but openly; merely taking means to prevent the concealed thing from being, by any possible accident, discovered.

When the craving of hunger was satisfied, she appeared to suffer less from the persecution of her tormentor than before; whether it was, as Mrs Sullivan thought, that the food with which she plied it appeased in some degree its irritability, or lessened that of the stranger, it was difficult to say; at all events, she became more composed; her eyes resumed somewhat of a natural expression; each sharp ferocious glare, which shot from them with such intense and rapid flashes, partially disappeared; her knit brows dilated, and part of a forehead, which had once been capacious and handsome, lost the contractions which deformed it by deep wrinkles. Altogether the change was evident, and very much relieved Mrs Sullivan, who could not avoid observing it.

## The Lianhan Shee

"It's not that I care much about it, if you'd think it not right o' me, but it's odd enough for you to keep the lower part of your face muffled up in that black cloth, an' then your forehead, too, is covered down on your face a bit. If they're part of the bargain," and she shuddered at the thought, "between you an' anything that's not good hem! I think you'd do well to throw thim off o' you, an' turn to thim that can protect you from everything that's bad. Now, a scapular would keep all the divils in hell from one; an' if you'd "

On looking at the stranger she hesitated, for the wild expression of her eyes began to return.

"Don't begin my punishment again," replied the woman; "make no allus don't make mention in my presence of anything that's good. Husht husht it's beginning easy now easy! No," said she, "I came to tell you, that only for my breaking a vow I made to this thing upon me, I'd be happy instead of miserable with it. I say, it's a good thing to have, if the person will use this bottle," she added, producing one, "as I will direct them."

"I wouldn't wish, for my part," replied Mrs Sullivan, "to have anything to do wid it neither act nor part"; and she crossed herself devoutly, on contemplating such an unholy alliance as that at which her companion hinted.

"Mary Sullivan," replied the other, "I can put good fortune and happiness in the way of you and yours. It is for you the good is intended; if you don't get both, no other can," and her eyes kindled as she spoke like those of the Pyrhones in the moment of inspiration.

Mrs Sullivan looked at her with awe, fear, and a strong mixture of curiosity; she had often heard that the Lianhan Shee had, through means of the person to whom it was bound, conferred wealth upon several, although it could never render this important service to those who exercised direct authority over it. She therefore experienced something like a conflict between her fears and a love of that wealth, the possession of which was so plainly intimated to her.

"The money," said she, "would be one thing, but to have the Lianhan Shee planted over a body's shouldher och! the saints preserve us! no, not for oceans of hard goold would I have it in my company one minnit. But in regard to the money hem! why, if it could be managed without havin' act or part wid that thing, people would do anything in reason and fairity."

"You have this day been kind to me," replied the woman, "and that's what I can't say of many dear help me! husht! Every door is shut in my face! Does not every cheek get pale when I am seen? If I meet a fellow-creature on the road, they turn into the field to avoid me; if I ask for food, it's to a deaf ear I speak; if I am thirsty, they send me to the river. What house would shelter me? In cold, in hunger, in drought, in storm, and in tempest, I am alone and unfriended, hated, feared, an' avoided; starving in the winter's cold, and burning in the summer's heat. All this is my fate here; and oh! oh! oh! have mercy, tormentor have mercy! I will not lift my thoughts there I'll keep the paction but spare me now!"

She turned round as she spoke, seeming to follow an invisible object, or, perhaps, attempting to get a more complete view of the mysterious being which exercised such a terrible and painful influence over her. Mrs Sullivan, also, kept her eye fixed upon the lump, and actually believed that she saw it move. Fear of incurring the displeasure of what it contained, and a superstitious reluctance harshly to thrust a person from her door who had eaten of her food, prevented her from desiring the woman to depart.

"In the name of Goodness," she replied, "I will have nothing to do wid your gift. Providence, blessed be His name, has done well for me an' mine; an' it mightn't be right to go beyant what it has pleased Him to give me."

"A rational sentiment! I mean there's good sense in what you say," answered the stranger: "but you need not be afraid," and she accompanied the expression by holding up the bottle and kneeling. "Now," she added, "listen to me, and judge for yourself, if what I say, when I swear it, can be a lie." She then proceeded to utter oaths of the

## The Lianhan Shee

most solemn nature, the purport of which was to assure Mrs Sullivan that drinking of the bottle would be attended with no danger.

"You see this little bottle? Drink it. Oh, for my sake and your own, drink it; it will give wealth without end to you and to all belonging to you. Take one-half of it before sunrise, and the other half when he goes down. You must stand while drinking it, with your face to the east, in the morning; and at night, to the west. Will you promise to do thus?"

"How would drinkin' the bottle get me money?" inquired Mrs Sullivan, who certainly felt a strong tendency of heart to the wealth.

"That I can't tell you now, nor would you understand it, even if I could; but you will know all when what I say is complied with."

"Keep your bottle, dacent woman. I wash my hands out of it: the saints above guard me from the timptation! I'm sure it's not right, for as I'm a sinner, 'tis gettin' stronger every minute widin me! Keep it! I'm loth to bid any one that ett o' my bread to go from my hearth, but if you go, I'll make it worth your while. Saints above! what's comin' over me? In my whole life I never had such a hankerin' afther money! Well, well, but it's quare entirely!"

"Will you drink it?" asked her companion. "If it does hurt or harm to you or yours, or anything but good, may what is hanging over me be fulfilled!" and she extended a thin, but, considering her years, not ungraceful arm, in the act of holding out the bottle to her kind entertainer.

"For the sake of all that's good and gracious, take it without scruple it is not hurtful, a child might drink every drop that's in it. Oh, for the sake of all you love, and of all that love you, take it!" and as she urged her the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"No, no," replied Mrs Sullivan, "it'll never cross my lips; not if it made me as rich as ould Hendherson, that airs his guineas in the sun, for fraid they'd get light by lyin' past."

"I entreat you to take it," said the strange woman.

"Never, never! once for all I say, I won't; so spare your breath."

The firmness of the good housewife was not, in fact, to be shaken; so, after exhausting all the motives and arguments with which she could urge the accomplishment of her design, the strange woman, having again put the bottle into her bosom, prepared to depart.

She had now once more become calm, and resumed her seat with the languid air of one who has suffered much exhaustion and excitement. She put her hand upon her forehead for a few moments, as if collecting her faculties, or endeavouring to remember the purport of their previous conversation. A slight moisture had broken through her skin, and altogether, notwithstanding her avowed criminality in entering into an unholy bond, she appeared an object of deep compassion.

In a moment her manner changed again, and her eyes blazed out once more, as she asked her alarmed hostess,

"Again, Mary Sullivan, will you take the gift that I have it in my power to give you? ay or no? speak, poor mortal, if you know what is for your own good."

Mrs Sullivan's fears, however, had overcome her love of money, particularly as she thought that wealth obtained in such a manner could not prosper; her only objection being to the means of acquiring it.



## The Lianhan Shee

"Oh!" said the stranger, "am I doomed never to meet with anyone who will take the promise off me by drinking of this bottle. Oh! but I am unhappy! What it is to fear ah! ah! and keep His commandments. Had I done so in my youthful time, I wouldn't now ah merciful mother, is there no relief? kill me, tormentor; kill me outright, for surely the pangs of eternity cannot be greater than those you now make me suffer. Woman," said she, and her muscles stood out in extraordinary energy "woman, Mary Sullivan ay, if you should kill me blast me where I stand, I will say the word woman you have daughters teach them to fear " Having got so far, she stopped her bosom heaved up and down her frame shook dreadfully her eyeballs became lurid and fiery her hands were clenched, and the spasmodic throes of inward convulsion worked the white froth up to her mouth; at length she suddenly became like a statue, with this wild supernatural expression intense upon her, and with an awful calmness, by far more dreadful than excitement could be, concluded by pronouncing in deep husky tones the name of God.

Having accomplished this with such a powerful struggle, she turned round with pale despair in her countenance and manner, and with streaming eyes slowly departed, leaving Mrs Sullivan in a situation not at all to be envied.

In a short time the other members of the family, who had been out at their evening employments, returned. Bartley, her husband, having entered somewhat sooner than his three daughters from milking, was the first to come in; presently the girls followed, and in a few minutes they sat down to supper, together with the servants, who dropped in one by one, after the toil of the day. On placing themselves about the table, Bartley as usual took his seat at the head; but Mrs Sullivan, instead of occupying hers, sat at the fire in a state of uncommon agitation. Every two or three minutes she would cross herself devoutly, and mutter such prayers against spiritual influences of an evil nature as she could compose herself to remember.

"Thin, why don't you come to your supper, Mary," said the husband, "while the sowans are warm? Brave and thick they are this night, any way."

His wife was silent, for so strong a hold had the strange woman and her appalling secret upon her mind, that it was not till he repeated his question three or four times raising his head with surprise, and asking, "Eh, thin, Mary, what's come over you is it unwell you are?" that she noticed what he said.

"Supper!" she exclaimed; "unwell! 'tis a good right I have to be unwell, I hope nothing bad will happen, any way. Feel my face, Nannie," she added, addressing one of her daughters; "it's as cowld an' wet as a limestone ay, an' if you found me a corpse before you, it wouldn't be at all strange."

There was a general pause at the seriousness of this intimation. The husband rose from his supper, and went up to the hearth where she sat.

"Turn round to the light," said he; "why, Mary dear, in the name of wondher, what ails you? for you're like a corpse sure enough. Can't you tell us what has happened, or what put you in such a state? Why, childhre, the cowld sweat's teemin' off her!"

The poor woman, unable to sustain the shock produced by her interview with the stranger, found herself getting more weak, and requested a drink of water; but before it could be put to her lips, she laid her head upon the back of the chair and fainted. Grief, and uproar, and confusion followed this alarming incident. The presence of mind, so necessary on such occasions, was wholly lost; one ran here, and another there, all jostling against each other, without being cool enough to render her proper assistance. The daughters were in tears, and Bartley himself was dreadfully shocked by seeing his wife apparently lifeless before him.

She soon recovered, however, and relieved them from the apprehension of her death, which they thought had actually taken place. "Mary," said the husband, "something quare entirely has happened, or you wouldn't be in this state!"

## The Lianhan Shee

"Did any of you see a strange woman lavin' the house a minute or two before ye came in?" she inquired.

"No," they replied, "not a stim of anyone did we see."

"Wurrah dheelish! No? now is it possible ye didn't?" She then described her, but all declared they had seen no such person.

"Bartley, whisper," said she, and beckoning him over to her, in a few words she revealed the secret. The husband grew pale and crossed himself. "Mother of Saints! childhre," said he, "a Lianhan Shee!" The words were no sooner uttered than every countenance assumed the pallidness of death; and every right hand was raised in the act of blessing the person, and crossing the forehead. "The Lianhan Shee!!" all exclaimed in fear and horror "This day's Friday; God betwixt us an' harm!"

It was now after dusk, and the hour had already deepened into the darkness of a calm, moonless, summer night; the hearth, therefore, in a short time, became surrounded by a circle, consisting of every person in the house; the door was closed and securely bolted; a struggle for the safest seat took place; and to Bartley's shame be it spoken, he lodged himself on the hob within the jamb, as the most distant situation from the fearful being known as the Lianhan Shee. The recent terror, however, brooded over them all; their topic of conversation was the mysterious visit, of which Mrs Sullivan gave a painfully accurate detail; whilst every ear of those who composed her audience was set, and every single hair of their heads bristled up, as if awakened into distinct life by the story. Bartley looked into the fire soberly, except when the cat, in prowling about the dresser, electrified him into a start of fear, which sensation went round every link of the living chain about the hearth.

The next day the story spread through the whole neighbourhood, accumulating in interest and incident as it went. Where it received the touches, embellishments, and emendations, with which it was amplified, it would be difficult to say: every one told it, forsooth, exactly as he heard it from another, but indeed it is not improbable that those through whom it passed were unconscious of the additions it had received at their hands. It is not unreasonable to suppose that imagination in such cases often colours highly without a premeditated design of falsehood. Fear and dread, however, accompanied its progress; such families as had neglected to keep holy water in their houses borrowed some from their neighbours; every old prayer which had become rusty from disuse was brightened up charms were hung about the necks of cattle, and gospels about those of children crosses were placed over the doors and windows; no unclean water was thrown out before sunrise or after dusk "E'en those prayed now who never prayed before, And those who always prayed, still prayed the more."

The inscrutable woman who caused such general dismay in the parish was an object of much pity. Avoided, feared, and detested, she could find no rest for her weary feet, nor any shelter for her unprotected head. If she was seen approaching a house, the door and windows were immediately closed against her; if met on the way she was avoided as a pestilence. How she lived no one could tell, for none would permit themselves to know. It was asserted that she existed without meat or drink, and that she was doomed to remain possessed of life, the prey of hunger and thirst, until she could get some one weak enough to break the spell by drinking her hellish draught, to taste which, they said, would be to change places with herself, and assume her despair and misery.

There had lived in the country about six months before her appearance in it, a man named Stephenson. He was unmarried, and the last of his family. This person led a solitary and secluded life, and exhibited during the last years of his existence strong symptoms of eccentricity, which for some months before his death assumed a character of unquestionable derangement. He was found one morning hanging by a halter in his own stable, where he had, under the influence of his malady, committed suicide. At this time the public press had not, as now, familiarised the minds of the people to that dreadful crime, and it was consequently looked upon then with an intensity of horror of which we can scarcely entertain any adequate notion. His farm remained unoccupied, for while an acre of land could be obtained in any other quarter, no man would enter upon such unhallowed premises. The house was locked up, and it was currently reported that Stephenson and the devil each night repeated the

## The Lianhan Shee

hanging scene in the stable; and that when the former was committing the "hopeless sin," the halter slipped several times from the beam of the stable-loft, when Satan came, in the shape of a dark-complexioned man with a hollow voice, and secured the rope until Stephenson's end was accomplished.

In this stable did the wanderer take up her residence at night; and when we consider the belief of the people in the night-scenes which were supposed to occur in it, we need not be surprised at the new features of horror which this circumstance superadded to her character. Her presence and appearance in the parish were dreadful; a public outcry was soon raised against her, which, were it not from fear of her power over their lives and cattle, might have ended in her death. None, however, had courage to grapple with her, or to attempt expelling her by violence, lest a signal vengeance might be taken on any who dared to injure a woman that could call in the terrible aid of the Lianhan Shee.

In this state of feeling they applied to the parish priest, who, on hearing the marvellous stories related concerning her, and on questioning each man closely upon his authority, could perceive that, like most other reports, they were to be traced principally to the imagination and fears of the people. He ascertained, however, enough from Bartley Sullivan to justify a belief that there was something certainly uncommon about the woman; and being of a cold, phlegmatic disposition, with some humour, he desired them to go home, if they were wise he shook his head mysteriously as he spoke "and do the woman no injury, if they didn't wish" and with this abrupt hint he sent them about their business.

This, however, did not satisfy them. In the same parish lived a suspended priest, called Father Philip O'Dallaghy, who supported himself, as most of them do, by curing certain diseases of the people miraculously! He had no other means of subsistence, nor, indeed, did he seem strongly devoted to life, or to the pleasures it afforded. He was not addicted to those intemperate habits which characterise "Blessed Priests" in general; spirits he never tasted, nor any food that could be termed a luxury, or even a comfort. His communion with the people was brief, and marked by a tone of severe contemptuous misanthropy. He seldom stirred abroad except during morning, or in the evening twilight, when he might be seen gliding amidst the coming darkness, like a dissatisfied spirit. His life was an austere one, and his devotional practices were said to be of the most remorseful character. Such a man, in fact, was calculated to hold a powerful sway over the prejudices and superstitions of the people. This was true. His power was considered almost unlimited, and his life one that would not disgrace the highest saint in the calendar. There were not wanting some persons in the parish who hinted that Father Felix O'Rourke, the parish priest, was himself rather reluctant to incur the displeasure, or challenge the power of the Lianhan Shee, by driving its victim out of the parish. The opinion of these persons was, in its distinct unvarnished reality, that Father Felix absolutely showed the white feather on this critical occasion that he became shy, and begged leave to decline being introduced to this intractable pair seeming to intimate that he did not at all relish adding them to the stock of his acquaintances.

Father Philip they considered as a decided contrast to him on this point. His stern and severe manner, rugged, and, when occasion demanded, daring, they believed suitable to the qualities requisite for sustaining such an interview. They accordingly waited on him; and after Bartley and his friends had given as faithful a report of the circumstances as, considering all things, could be expected, he told Bartley he would hear from Mrs Sullivan's own lips the authentic narrative. This was quite satisfactory, and what was expected from him. As for himself, he appeared to take no particular interest in the matter, further than that of allaying the ferment and alarm which had spread through the parish.

"Plase your Reverence," said Bartley, "she came in to Mary, and she alone in the house, and for the matther o' that, I believe she laid hands upon her, and tossed and tumbled the crathur, and she but a sickly woman, through the four corners of the house. Not that Mary lets an so much, for she's afeard; but I know from her way, when she spakes about her, that it's thruth, your Reverence."

## The Lianhan Shee

"But didn't the Lianhan Shee," said one of them, "put a sharp-pointed knife to her breast, wid a divilish intintion of makin' her give the best of atin' an' dhrinkin' the house afforded?"

"She got the victuals, to a sartinty," replied Bartley, "and 'overlooked' my woman for her pains; for she's not the picture of herself since."

Everyone now told some magnified and terrible circumstance, illustrating the formidable power of the Lianhan Shee.

When they had finished, the sarcastic lip of the priest curled into an expression of irony and contempt; his brow, which was naturally black and heavy, darkened; and a keen, but rather a ferocious-looking, eye shot forth a glance, which, while it intimated disdain for those to whom it was directed, spoke also of a dark and troubled spirit in himself. The man seemed to brook with scorn the degrading situation of a religious quack, to which some uncontrollable destiny had doomed him.

"I shall see your wife to-morrow," said he to Bartley; "and after hearing the plain account of what happened, I will consider what is best to be done with this dark, perhaps unhappy, perhaps guilty character; but whether dark, or unhappy, or guilty, I, for one, should not, and will not, avoid her. Go, and bring me word to-morrow evening when I can see her on the following day. Begone!"

When they withdrew, Father Philip paced his room for some time in silence and anxiety.

"Ay," said he, "infatuated people! sunk in superstition and ignorance, yet, perhaps, happier in your degradation than those who, in the pride of knowledge, can only look back upon a life of crime and misery. What is a sceptic? What is an infidel? Men who, when they will not submit to moral restraint, harden themselves into scepticism and infidelity, until, in the headlong career of guilt, that which was first adopted to lull the outcry of conscience, is supported by the pretended pride of principle. Principle in a sceptic! Hollow and devilish lie! Would I have plunged into scepticism, had I not first violated the moral sanctions of religion? Never. I became an infidel, because I first became a villain! Writhing under a load of guilt, that which I wished might be true, I soon forced myself to think true: and now" he here clenched his hands and groaned "now ay, now and hereafter oh, that hereafter! Why can I not shake the thoughts of it from my conscience? Religion! Christianity! With all the hardness of an infidel's heart, I feel your truth; because, if every man were the villain that infidelity would make him, then indeed might every man curse God for the existence bestowed upon him as I would, but dare not do. Yet why can I not believe? Alas! why should God accept an unrepentant heart? Am I not a hypocrite, mocking Him by a guilty pretension to His power, and leading the dark into thicker darkness? Then these hands blood! broken vows! ha! ha! ha! Well, go let misery have its laugh, like the light that breaks from the thunder-cloud. Prefer Voltaire to Christ; sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind, as I have done ha, ha, ha! Swim, world swim about me! I have lost the ways of Providence, and am dark! She awaits me; but I broke the chain that galled us: yet it still rankles still rankles!"

The unhappy man threw himself into a chair in a paroxysm of frenzied agony. For more than an hour he sat in the same posture, until he became gradually hardened into a stiff, lethargic insensibility, callous and impervious to feeling, reason, or religion an awful transition from a visitation of conscience so terrible as that which he had just suffered. At length he arose, and by walking moodily about, relapsed into his usual gloomy and restless character.

When Bartley went home, he communicated to his wife Father Philip's intention of calling on the following day, to hear a correct account of the Lianhan Shee.

"Why, thin," said she, "I'm glad of it, for I intinded myself to go to him, any way, to get my new scapular consecrated. How-an'-ever, as he's to come, I'll get a set of gospels for the boys an' girls, an' he can consecrate all when his hand's in. Aroon, Bartley, they say that man's so holy that he can do anything ay, melt a body off the

## The Lianhan Shee

face o' the earth, like snow off a ditch. Dear me, but the power they have is strange all out!"

"There's no use in gettin' him anything to ate or dhrink," replied Bartley; "he wouldn't take a glass o' whisky once in seven years. Throth, myself thinks he's a little too dhry; sure he might be holy enough, an' yet take a sup of an odd time. There's Father Felix, an' though we all know he's far from bein' so blessed a man as him, yet he has friendship an' neighbourliness in him, an' never refuses a glass in rason."

"But do you know what I was tould about Father Philip, Bartley?"

"I'll tell you that afther I hear it, Mary, my woman; you won't expect me to tell what I don't know? ha, ha, ha!"

"Behave, Bartley, an' quit your jokin' now, at all evints; keep it till we're talkin' of somethin' else, an' don't let us be committin' sin, maybe, while we're spakin' of what we're spakin' about; but they say it's as thru as the sun to the dial: the Lent afore last itself it was, he never tasted mate or dhrink durin' the whole seven weeks! Oh, you needn't stare! it's well known by thim that has as much sinse as you no, not so much as you'd carry on the point o' this knittin'-needle. Well, sure the housekeeper an' the two sarvants wondhered faix, they couldn't do less an' took it into their heads to watch him closely; an' what do you think blessed be all the saints above! what do you think they seen?"

"The Goodness above knows; for me I don't."

"Why, thin, whin he was asleep they seen a small silk thread in his mouth, that came down through the ceilin' from heaven, an' he suckin' it, just as a child would his mother's breast whin the crathur 'ud be asleep: so that was the way he was supported by the angels! An' I remimber myself, though he's a dark, spare, yallow man at all times, yet he never looked half so fat an' rosy as he did the same Lent!"

"Glory be to Heaven! Well, well it is sthrange the power they have! As for him, I'd as lee meet St Pether, or St Pathrick himself, as him; for one can't but fear him, somehow,"

"Fear him! Och, it 'ud be the pity o' thim that 'ud do anything to vex or anger that man. Why, his very look 'ud wither thim, till there wouldn't be the thrack o' thim on the earth; an' as for his curse, why it 'ud scorch thim to ashes!"

As it was generally known that Father Philip was to visit Mrs Sullivan the next day, in order to hear an account of the mystery which filled the parish with such fear, a very great number of the parishioners were assembled in and about Bartley's long before he made his appearance. At length he was seen walking slowly down the road, with an open book in his hand, on the pages of which he looked from time to time. When he approached the house, those who were standing about it assembled in a body, and, with one consent, uncovered their heads, and asked his blessing. His appearance bespoke a mind ill at ease; his face was haggard, and his eyes bloodshot. On seeing the people kneel, he smiled with his usual bitterness, and, shaking his hand with an air of impatience over them, muttered some words, rather in mockery of the ceremony than otherwise. They then rose, and, blessing themselves, put on their hats, rubbed the dust off their knees, and appeared to think themselves recruited by a peculiar accession of grace.

On entering the house the same form was repeated; and when it was over, the best chair was placed for him by Mary's own hands, and the fire stirred up, and a line of respect drawn, within which none was to intrude, lest he might feel in any degree incommoded.

"My good neighbour," said he to Mrs Sullivan, "what strange woman is this, who has thrown the parish into such a ferment? I'm told she paid you a visit? Pray sit down."

## The Lianhan Shee

"I humbly thank your Reverence," said Mary, curtsying lowly, "but I'd rather not sit, sir, if you, please. I hope I know what respect manes, your Reverence. Barny Bradagh, I'll thank you to stand up, if you please, an' his Reverence to the fore, Barny."

"I ax your Reverence's pardon, an' yours, too, Mrs Sullivan; sure we didn't mane the disrespect, anyhow, sir, please your Reverence."

"About this woman, and the Lianhan Shee," said the priest, without noticing Barny's apology. "Pray what do you precisely understand by a Lianhan Shee?"

"Why, sir," replied Mary, "some sthrange bein' from the good people, or fairies, that sticks to some persons. There's a bargain, sir, your Reverence, made atween thim; an' the divil, sir, that is, the ould boy the saints about us! has a hand in it. The Lianhan Shee, your Reverence, is never seen only by thim it keeps wid; but hem! it always, wid the help of the ould boy, conthrives, sir, to make the person brake the agreement, an' thin it has thim in its power; but if they don't brake the agreement, thin it's in their power. If they can get anybody to put in their place, they may get out o' the bargain; for they can, of a sartainty, give oceans o' money to people, but can't take any themselves, please your Reverence. But sure, where's the use o' me to be tellin' your Reverence what you know betther nor myself? an' why shouldn't you, or any one that has the power you have?"

He smiled again at this in his own peculiar manner, and was proceeding to inquire more particularly into the nature of the interview between them, when the noise of feet, and sounds of general alarm, accompanied by a rush of people into the house, arrested his attention, and he hastily inquired into the cause of the commotion. Before he could receive a reply, however, the house was almost crowded; and it was not without considerable difficulty that, by the exertions of Mrs Sullivan and Bartley, sufficient order and quiet were obtained to hear distinctly what was said.

"Plase your Reverence," said several voices at once, "they're comin', hot-foot, into the very house to us! Was ever the likes seen! an' they must know right well, sir, that you're widin it."

"Who are coming?" he inquired.

"Why, the woman, sir, an' her good pet, the Lianhan Shee, your Reverence!"

"Well," said he, "but why should you all appear so blanched with terror? Let her come in, and we shall see how far she is capable of injuring her fellow-creatures: some maniac," he muttered, in a low soliloquy, "whom the villainy of the world has driven into derangement some victim to a hand like m . Well, they say there is a Providence, yet such things are permitted!"

"He's sayin' a prayer now," observed one of them; "haven't we a good right to be thankful that he's in the place wid us while she's in it, or dear knows what harm she might do us maybe rise the wind!"

As the latter speaker concluded, there was a dead silence. The persons about the door crushed each other backwards, their feet set out before them, and their shoulders laid with violent pressure against those who stood behind, for each felt anxious to avoid all danger of contact with a being against whose power even a blessed priest found it necessary to guard himself by a prayer.

At length a low murmur ran among the people "Father O'Rourke! here's Father O'Rourke! he has turned the corner after her, an' they're both comin' in." Immediately they entered, but it was quite evident, from the manner of the worthy priest, that he was unacquainted with the person of this singular being. When they crossed the threshold, the priest advanced, and expressed his surprise at the throng of people assembled.

## The Lianhan Shee

"Plase your Reverence," said Bartley, "that's the woman," nodding significantly towards her as he spoke, but without looking at her person, lest the evil eye he dreaded so much might meet his, and give him "the blast."

The dreaded female, on seeing the house in such a crowded state, started, paused, and glanced with some terror at the persons assembled. Her dress was not altered since her last visit; but her countenance, though more meagre and emaciated, expressed but little of the unsettled energy which then flashed from her eyes, and distorted her features by the depth of that mysterious excitement by which she had been agitated. Her countenance was still muffled as before, the awful protuberance rose from her shoulders, and the same band which Mrs Sullivan had alluded to during their interview, was bound about the upper part of her forehead.

She had already stood upwards of two minutes, during which the fall of a feather might be heard, yet none bade God bless her no kind hand was extended to greet her no heart warmed in affection towards her; on the contrary, every eye glanced at her, as a being marked with enmity towards God. Blanched faces and knit brows, the signs of fear and hatred, were turned upon her; her breath was considered pestilential, and her touch paralysis. There she stood, proscribed, avoided, and hunted like a tigress, all fearing to encounter, yet wishing to exterminate her! Who could she be? or what had she done, that the finger of the Almighty marked her out for such a fearful weight of vengeance?

Father Philip rose and advanced a few steps, until he stood confronting her. His person was tall, his features dark, severe, and solemn: and when the nature of the investigation about to take place is considered, it need not be wondered at, that the moment was, to those present, one of deep and impressive interest such as a visible conflict between a supposed champion of God and a supernatural being was calculated to excite.

"Woman," said he, in his deep stern voice, "tell me who and what you are, and why you assume a character of such a repulsive and mysterious nature, when it can entail only misery, shame, and persecution on yourself? I conjure you, in the name of Him after whose image you are created, to speak truly!"

He paused, and the tall figure stood mute before him. The silence was dead as death every breath was hushed and the persons assembled stood immovable as statues! Still she spoke not; but the violent heaving of her breast evinced the internal working of some dreadful struggle. Her face before was pale it was now ghastly; her lips became blue, and her eyes vacant.

"Speak!" said he; "I conjure you in the name of the power by whom you live!"

It is probable that the agitation under which she laboured was produced by the severe effort made to sustain the unexpected trial she had to undergo.

For some minutes her struggle continued; but having begun at its highest pitch, it gradually subsided until it settled in a calmness which appeared fixed and awful as the resolution of despair. With breathless composure she turned round, and put back that part of her dress which concealed her face, except the band on her forehead, which she did not remove; having done this, she turned again, and walked calmly towards Father Philip, with a deadly smile upon her thin lips. When within a step of where he stood, she paused, and, riveting her eyes upon him, exclaimed,

"Who and what am I? The victim of infidelity and you, the bearer of a cursed existence, the scoff and scorn of the world, the monument of a broken vow and a guilty life, a being scourged by the scorpion lash of conscience, blasted by periodical insanity, pelted by the winter's storm, scorched by the summer's heat, withered by starvation, hated by man, and touched into my inmost spirit by the anticipated tortures of future misery. I have no rest for the sole of my foot, no repose for a head distracted by the contemplation of a guilty life; I am the unclean spirit which walketh to seek rest and findeth none; I am what you have made me! Behold," she added, holding up the bottle, "this failed, and I live to accuse you. But no, you are my husband though our union was but a guilty form, and I

## The Lianhan Shee

will bury that in silence. You thought me dead, and you flew to avoid punishment; did you avoid it? No; the finger of God has written pain and punishment upon your brow. I have been in all characters, in all shapes, have spoken with the tongue of a peasant, moved in my natural sphere, but my knees were smitten, my brain stricken, and the wild malady which banishes me from society has been upon me for years. Such I am, and such, I say, have you made me. As for you, kind-hearted woman, there was nothing in this bottle but pure water. The interval of reason returned this day, and having remembered glimpses of our conversation, I came to apologise to you, and to explain the nature of my unhappy distemper, and to beg a little bread, which I have not tasted for two days. I at times conceive myself attended by an evil spirit, shaped out by a guilty conscience, and this is the only familiar which attends me, and by it I have been dogged into madness through every turning of life. Whilst it lasts I am subject to spasms and convulsive starts which are exceedingly painful. The lump on my back is the robe I wore when innocent in my peaceful convent."

The intensity of general interest was now transferred to Father Philip; every face was turned towards him, but he cared not. A solemn stillness yet prevailed among all present. From the moment she spoke, her eye drew his with the power of a basilisk. His pale face became like marble, not a muscle moved; and when she ceased speaking, his bloodshot eyes were still fixed upon her countenance with a gloomy calmness like that which precedes a tempest. They stood before each other, dreadful counterparts in guilt, for truly his spirit was as dark as hers.

At length he glanced angrily around him: "Well," said he, "what is it now, ye poor infatuated wretches, to trust in the sanctity of man? Learn from me to place the same confidence in God which you place in His guilty creatures, and you will not lean on a broken reed. Father O'Rourke, you, too, witness my disgrace, but not my punishment. It is pleasant, no doubt, to have a topic for conversation at your Conferences; enjoy it. As for you, Margaret, if society lessen misery, we may be less miserable. But the band of your order, and the remembrance of your vow is on your forehead, like the mark of Cain tear it off, and let it not blast a man who is the victim of prejudice still, nay, of superstition, as well as of guilt; tear it from my sight." His eyes kindled fearfully as he attempted to pull it away by force.

She calmly took it off, and he immediately tore it into pieces, and stamped upon the fragments as he flung them on the ground.

"Come," said the despairing man "come there is a shelter for you, but no peace! food, and drink, and raiment, but no peace! NO PEACE!" As he uttered these words, in a voice that sank to its deepest pitch, he took her hand, and they both departed to his own residence.

The amazement and horror of those who were assembled in Bartley's house cannot be described. Our readers may be assured that they deepened in character as they spread through the parish. An undefined fear of this mysterious pair seized upon the people, for their images were associated in their minds with darkness and crime, and supernatural communion. The departing words of Father Philip rang in their ears: they trembled, and devoutly crossed themselves, as fancy again repeated the awful exclamation of the priest "No peace! no peace!"

When Father Philip and his unhappy associate went home, he instantly made her a surrender of his small property; but with difficulty did he command sufficient calmness to accomplish even this. He was distracted his blood seemed to have been turned to fire he clenched his hands, and he gnashed his teeth, and exhibited the wildest symptoms of madness. About ten o'clock he desired fuel for a large fire to be brought into the kitchen, and got a strong cord, which he coiled, and threw carelessly on the table. The family were then ordered to bed. About eleven they were all asleep; and at the solemn hour of twelve he heaped additional fuel upon the living turf, until the blaze shone with scorching light upon everything around. Dark and desolating was the tempest within him, as he paced, with agitated steps, before the crackling fire.

"She is risen!" he exclaimed "the spectre of all my crimes is risen to haunt me through life! I am a murderer yet she lives, and my guilt is not the less! The stamp of eternal infamy is upon me the finger of scorn will mark me



## The Lianhan Shee

out the tongue of reproach will sting me like that of the serpent the deadly touch of shame will cover me like a leper the laws of society will crush the murderer, not the less that his wickedness in blood has miscarried: after that comes the black and terrible tribunal of the Almighty's vengeance of His fiery indignation! Hush! What sounds are those? They deepen they deepen! Is it thunder? It cannot be the crackling of the blaze! It is thunder! but it speaks only to my ear! Hush! Great God, there is a change in my voice! It is hollow and supernatural! Could a change have come over me? Am I living? Could I have Hah! Could I have departed? and am I now at length given over to the worm that never dies? If it be at my heart, I may feel it. God! I am damned! Here is a viper twined about my limbs, trying to dart its fangs into my heart! Hah! there are feet pacing in the room, too, and I hear voices! I am surrounded by evil spirits! Who's there? What are you? Speak! They are silent! There is no answer! Again comes the thunder! But perchance this is not my place of punishment, and I will try to leave these horrible spirits!"

He opened the door, and passed out into a small green field that lay behind the house. The night was calm, and the silence profound as death. Not a cloud obscured the heavens; the light of the moon fell upon the stillness of the scene around him, with all the touching beauty of a moonlit midnight in summer. Here he paused a moment, felt his brow, then his heart, the palpitations of which fell audibly upon his ear. He became somewhat cooler; the images of madness which had swept through his stormy brain disappeared, and were succeeded by a lethargic vacancy of thought, which almost deprived him of the consciousness of his own identity. From the green field he descended mechanically to a little glen which opened beside it. It was one of those delightful spots to which the heart clingeth. Its sloping sides were clothed with patches of wood, on the leaves of which the moonlight glanced with a soft lustre, rendered more beautiful by their stillness. That side on which the light could not fall, lay in deep shadow, which occasionally gave to the rocks and small projecting precipices an appearance of monstrous and unnatural life. Having passed through the tangled mazes of the glen, he at length reached its bottom, along which ran a brook, such as, in the description of the poet, "In the leafy month of June, Unto the sleeping woods all night, Singeth a quiet tune."

Here he stood, and looked upon the green winding margin of the streamlet but its song he heard not. With the workings of a guilty conscience, the beautiful in nature can have no association. He looked up the glen, but its picturesque windings, soft vistas, and wild underwood mingling with grey rocks and taller trees, all mellowed by the moon-beams, had no charms for him. He maintained a profound silence but it was not the silence of peace or reflection. He endeavoured to recall the scenes of the past day, but could not bring them back to his memory. Even the fiery tide of thought, which, like burning lava, seared his brain a few moments before, was now cold and hardened. He could remember nothing. The convulsion of his mind was over, and his faculties were impotent and collapsed.

In this state he unconsciously retraced his steps, and had again reached the paddock adjoining his house, when, as he thought, the figure of his paramour stood before him. In a moment his former paroxysm returned, and with it the gloomy images of a guilty mind, charged with the extravagant horrors of brain-struck madness.

"What!" he exclaimed, "the band still on your forehead! Tear it off!"

He caught at the form as he spoke, but there was no resistance to his grasp. On looking again towards the spot, it had ceased to be visible. The storm within him arose once more; he rushed into the kitchen, where the fire blazed out with fiercer heat; again he imagined that the thunder came to his ears, but the thunderings which he heard were only the voice of conscience. Again his own footsteps and his voice sounded in his fancy as the footsteps and voices of fiends, with which his imagination peopled the room. His state and his existence seemed to him a confused and troubled dream; he tore his hair threw it on the table and immediately started back with a hollow groan; for his locks, which but a few hours before had been as black as the raven's wing, were now white as snow!

On discovering this, he gave a low but frantic laugh "Ha, ha, ha!" he exclaimed; "here is another mark here is food for despair. Silently, but surely, did the hand of God work this, as a proof that I am hopeless! But I will bear

## The Lianhan Shee

it; I will bear the sight! I now feel myself a man blasted by the eye of God Himself! Ha, ha, ha! Food for despair! Food for despair!"

Immediately he passed into his own room, and approaching the looking-glass beheld a sight calculated to move a statue. His hair had become literally white, but the shades of his dark complexion, now distorted by terror and madness, flitted, as his features worked under the influence of his tremendous passions, into an expression so frightful, that deep fear came over himself. He snatched one of his razors, and fled from the glass to the kitchen. He looked upon the fire, and saw the white ashes lying around its edge.

"Ha!" said he, "the light is come! I see the sign. I am directed, and I will follow it. There is yet ONE hope. The immolation! I shall be saved, yet so as by fire. It is for this my hair has become white; the sublime warning for my self-sacrifice! The colour of ashes! white white! It is so! I will sacrifice my body in material fire, to save my soul from that which is eternal! But I had anticipated the SIGN! The self-sacrifice is accepted!"

We must here draw a veil over that which ensued, as the description of it would be both unnatural and revolting. Let it be sufficient to say, that the next morning he was found burnt to a cinder, with the exception of his feet and legs, which remained as monuments of, perhaps, the most dreadful suicide that ever was committed by man. His razor, too, was found bloody, and several clots of gore were discovered about the hearth; from which circumstances it was plain that he had reduced his strength so much by loss of blood, that when he committed himself to the flames, he was unable, even had he been willing, to avoid the fiery and awful sacrifice of which he made himself the victim. If anything could deepen the impression of fear and awe, already so general among the people, it was the unparalleled nature of his death. Its circumstances are yet remembered in the parish and county wherein it occurred for it is no fiction, gentle reader! and the titular bishop who then presided over the diocese declared, that while he lived no person bearing the unhappy man's name should ever be admitted to the clerical order.

The shock produced by his death struck the miserable woman into the utter darkness of settled derangement. She survived him some years, but wandered about through the province, still, according to the superstitious belief of the people, tormented by the terrible enmity of the Lianhan Shee.