

When she preached patience Martha eyed her calmly.

"Yo' know it ain't a matter of patience. In His own good time the Lord God will wax hot, and kill with the sword—that's His promise."

Then in urging forgiveness the parson's wife evaded the eyes of the outraged mother.

"It ain't vengeance as I call for, but justice," said Martha.

It became known in the village, although she confided in none, that Martha Martin had turned the key in her cottage door, and trudged many a mile and back to the county town, where she had waited on the supreme officer of police. She had gone with hope, and returned without it.

None seemed to appreciate the value of the life of little Cuckoo Flower, or the horror of her death. A little peasant wench, just one of thousands! Sad, sad indeed, but such things had happened before and would happen again. The criminal was probably one of the wild Irish who infested country places in harvest time, and who had long since returned to his distressful isle of bog and myrtle. Thus the Chief Constable!

"You're wrong," replied Martha, as she passed from his presence. "I've knowed these Irish from my youth up—they've the fear of God in 'em."

As Martha tramped home through the dripping rain she bethought her of a day in the heyday of youth. A dozen Paddies were located in the village, working early and late, reaping the golden harvest—sleeping in barns and stables on a shakedown of straw. Once in a lone place she came face to face with one of these men—his garments were tattered and torn. She recalled how he had opened a gate for her to pass through, and had stood bareheaded, smiling at her through the black-fringed splendour of his blue eyes, which expressed so inoffensively "You're a lovely lass." A prince in disguise she had thought him, because of his grand air and his voice beguiling, and she recalled how it had flashed through her mind "If this tattered boggart said 'Come'—what power could hinder her?"

Alack! how sad had been her heart on the day when, with all his worldly goods in a kerchief slung over his shoulder, he had stepped jauntily down the village street, face to the west—never, never to return!

Never had a man of this gallant race besmirched her tender Cuckoo Flower! Thus decided Martha.

The rain soaked through the woman's shawl and cotton garments as she walked stolidly

home. When she came within her cold and deserted houseplace she had done for ever with respect for the law of man.

She would take the law into her own hands.

Long she sat and brooded beside the fireless grate.

The murderer lived.

He should pay the price.

When face to face all things must be in order.

She lit a tallow dip in a metal stick and passed into the parlour. Here from before the rusty hobbled grate she pulled aside the mat, which in past years she had fashioned from snips of tailors' cloth. Revealed was a long and solid stone; she knelt down and tested it. It was firmly laid, but what had been done could be undone. She replaced the mat and crossed to the window; here the blind was down and the shutter fast closed. Then she fetched the coal hammer and a crowbar. She had a strong arm and a silent tongue.

She would prepare a place.

Then the Lord God would hear her cry—He had promised.

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Another year had passed.

The Lord God had given no sign.

The bean was again in flower.

Oh! how its subtle scent brought back the sweetness of little Cuckoo Flower!

Surely that was her gentle voice speaking with the flowers.

Martha rose and passed into the garden. The moon had risen—it was night. She stood in the shadow—footsteps she heard and voices just beyond the privet hedge in the lane. Two men came in sight. "Good-night, Bill," cried one. "I ain't going no farder—you cut through the wood, it's shortest road."

The two men parted, one returning the way he had come; the other turned into the lane leading to the village through the wood.

Martha watched him intently. She knew him to be the lad, now grown man, blamed by some for the death of her husband. He passed a few paces down the lane, turned and waited. She looked well at his face. Furtive it was and drawn with fear. Then he came stealthily back again—peered round the corner, and set off softly towards his home along the longest road.

He dared not pass through the wood.

Martha stood very still.

Her heart leapt in her bosom.

The Lord God had heard her cry.

She went within and closed the door

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When it became known that Bill Baily had taken his knapsack and set sail for foreign

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)