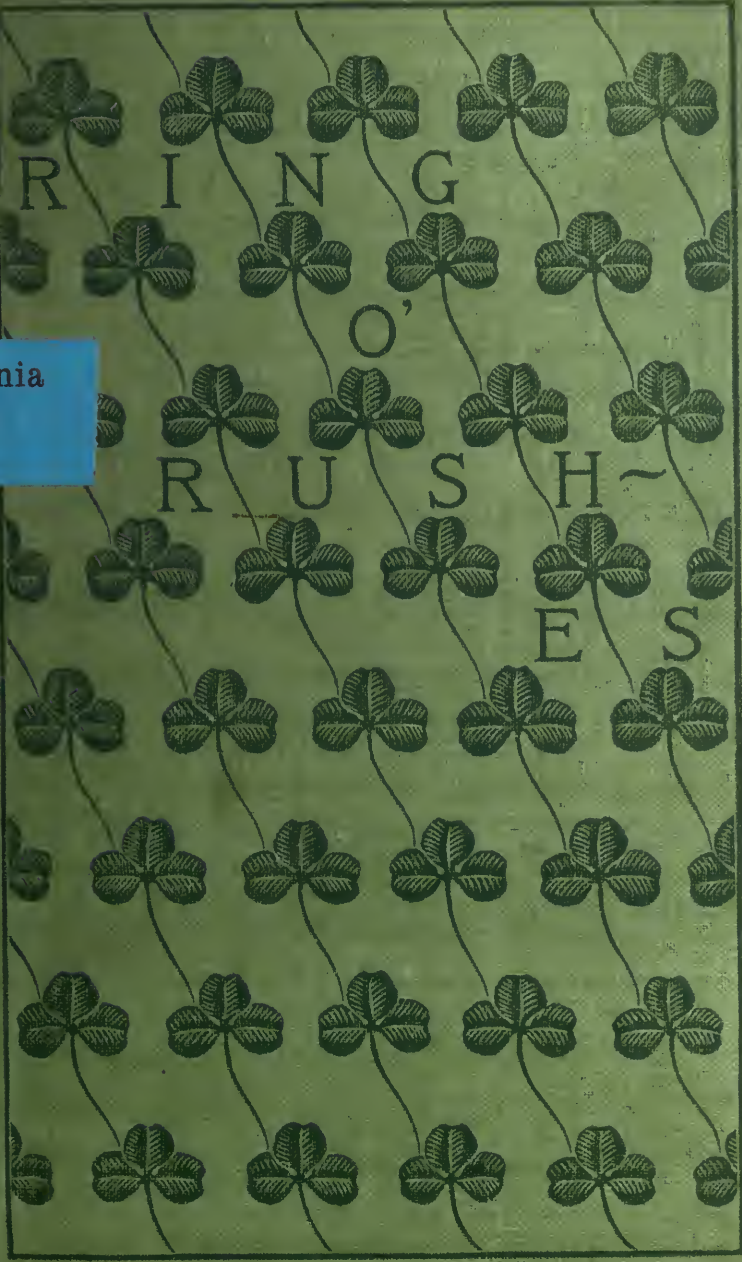
RING O' RUSHES

Stone + Kimball
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RING O' RUSHES

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BY

SHAN F. BULLOCK

NEW YORK
STONE & KIMBALL
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TO

MY BROTHERS IN CHICAGO

RING O' RUSHES.

PROLOGUE.

IF you enter Lismahee town by way of the ferry road, you pass the church, standing high beyond the graveyard wall among its yews and tombstones; then have a glimpse of the massive walls and shining windows of the poorhouse (the very walls which once heard the ramblings of Debbie Chance, and below which Solomon Gray used to take his weekly turn at the pump wheel); presently come to a filthy, ill-conditioned alley, through which you pass, and at once strike Lismahee in its very vitals.

This way and that, the long wide street — which, as in most Irish towns, is Lismahee itself — runs straight and level; a post car rattles over the stones; children sport on the sidewalks; shop keepers sit smoking on their window-sills; here and there a cart stands in the gutter, with a horse dozing between the shafts; from

the gardens and yards comes the sound of voices, the clatter of cans, the clutter of fowls; the sunlight dances on the high white walls, drowsiness is in the air, the reek of peat smoke (how wholesomely pungent it comes!) hangs heavy: behind the iron rails over there is the market yard, higher up is the bank, lower down the town pump, facing it the police barracks, beyond that the town hall (before which, one day, Phelim cried to Heaven for pity as he stood by his battered caubeen); thence your way lies over a ragged side-walk, past limewashed houses, dingy shops, the pillared porch of an inglorious hotel, the elegant mansions (withdrawn somewhat from the vulgar eye of the street) of the town magnates; then, all at once, hedges, ditches, the open country, and, in a little while, the pointed doorway of the railway station.

Irish trains are delightfully easy-going; they tarry long by platforms, and dally along the track; so that, as you make the ten miles or so which lies between Lismahee and Clogheen, you have ample opportunity, right and left, to spy out the beauties of the land. And a beautiful country it is just there: broad, fresh, cheerful, huddled with hills, dotted with cottages, cut into the semblance of some huge patch-work coverlet by the tall thick hedges; here a clump of stunted trees with

the grey rock shining out from the underwood, there a stretch of heathered bog with its mud-house and sparkling pools, and piles of black wet peat; on this side a very prairie (beyond which, say three miles away, lies the village of Knock), on that a sudden view of hazy mountains; presently, a grove of firs, a house on the hill, a smiling valley, and, just beyond, the spires and roofs of Clogheen.

Clogheen stands on a hill, and is a town of streets. Commissioners watch its interests; round one of the finest diamonds in Ulster stand the houses of the citizens; in the advertisement columns of the county newspapers its shops appear as Emporiums; its church, chapel, town hall, hotels, are buildings worthy of its greatness: but if you want to see Clogheen in its glory, walk through its surging streets on fair or market day. Then — Ah me!

Along the fair green runs the high road to Bunn; but, if you can spare an hour, resist the blandishments of the station car drivers, linger awhile on the platform — admiring the book-stall, the brawny corduroyed porters, the pigs and cattle in the vans, picturing to yourself, maybe, Mary the emigrant standing there weeping by her old yellow trunk; and presently take a seat with me in the afternoon train for Glann.

Ah! now we are on familiar ground; now recollections come crowding. How often past those hills and hedges has one come glorying and gone sorrowing; how many that one knew, sons and daughters of Ring o' Rushes, have sobbed good-bye, good-bye, to every field out there, as, homesick and heartbroken, they passed them for the last time! See, there is Caroo House, to which Herself came one day in tears; there, among the trees, is Bartley French's old home; the land is fair, you see, well-watered, full of trees and hills, ringed with mountains; there is Ballyhob Junction; there at last the flashing roofs of Bunn.

Bunn! the town of towns, the El Dorado of one's youth, how can child of yours (disillusioned now, and how little the happier!) look upon your battered streets and ragged houses without tears? What happenings one has seen from these market-house steps; what memories every stone of you holds; how the old familiar faces come pressing through the blue haze of your peat smoke! There the emigrants go skirling down the brae towards the station; up to God's acre our friends go silently; down from God's house the flower-crowned pairs come joyfully; there is Shan Grogan dusting his hat on the sidewalk; from the post office Tim Kerin comes shuffling over the stones, and wagging his old

head in search of Nan his wife. Ah, John, my son, before you go swaggering up Barrack Hill, take good heed of that joke of yours. Hush! here comes His Magnificence stalking up from the station. On he comes; picking his way through the mud, flashing his rings, looking right and left with disdainful eye: let us join the crowd of his admirers and humbly follow in his footsteps.

Down hill we go, past the police barracks and the butter market; soon, cross the bridge, and in two minutes are out in the brown dust of the county road. Broad and level the road runs between its high thick hedges, past lush meadows and scant pasture-land and rush-clad hills; here and there a house peeps between the alders; right before you my lord the mountain arches his long back against the blue; the sun rides high, the clouds hang silvern over a drowsy land.

His Magnificence crosses Multy Bridge and enters Bilboa, the land of whins, rushes, poplars; now he quickens his pace as he crosses Thrasna River and enters Gorteen, the land of orchards, gardens, pleasant cottages, of drum and fife; of wisdom and all the virtues. Up on the right, Rhamus Castle stands frowning in its solitude; over there is Emo, stretching its hedges along the Curleck road from Stonegate down

to the little bridge on which, one winter's night, George Lunny rested his stilts ; beyond that rush-fringed lake, a thatched house lies snug in the hollow of the hills, the home of one Rachel Hoey ; now comes a stretch of bog, brown with heather and peat, across which, many a time, Jane Fallon tramped on her way to church ; here is the boreen down which His Magnificence is even now treading disgustedly through the mud. Up the hill we go, past the school-house; turn sharp to the right, past the forge; and away, through the orchards and firs, down the broad sandy road which ends in a mile or two at the ferry for Lismahee, on the shore of bright Lough Erne.

And now, at last, we have made the circuit — our Ring o' Rushes — of that little corner of the earth in which, here and there, the stories that make this book are set. Often, no doubt, have you gone farther and fared better ; your feet are heavy with Irish clay, your eyes weary of Irish rushes, hedges, hills ; you have met only heavy-footed peasants by the way, heard only the brogue, and the skirl of the curlews ; you say, not without reason, that some great lord of the soil easily might hold our poor Ring o' Rushes in the hollow of his hand : still, strange to say, many worthy souls live happily among those barren hills, and love

them steadfastly ; some, exiles in this bustling outer world, have left their hearts there ; and one there is, a poor smoke-dried citizen now, who, as he stands sometimes blinking across his garden fence at a sky of fog and a landscape of bricks, has been known to cry out within himself that not all London is worth that hill and valley over which Rhamus Castle keeps watch and ward.

Contents.

	Page
His Magnificence	3
They That Mourn	33
The Rival Swains	49
They Twain	67
Shan's Diversion	93
Th' Ould Boy	109
Her Soger Boy	125
Rogue Bartley	147
The Splendid Shilling	175
The Emigrant	205
A Beggar's Benefit	219

His Magnificence.

His Magnificence.

When His Magnificence stepped from the train upon the dingy little platform of Bunn Station, the porter, the station-master, the car-driver from the Diamond Hotel, the loiterers, the passengers, all did him reverence. His like or equal had not met their gaze for many a day. He had the bearing and appearance of a prince. His luggage was powerful. The dirty train that had carried him, the paltry station that received him, the yokels who eyed him, by very contrast, seemed to shrink back ashamed. It was America herself set off against old Ireland.

"Who is he at all?" whispered one of the flurried, heated porters.

"Ach, g'luck an' don't bother me!" replied the porter. "How the divil can I tell?"

The car-driver, having an eye to business, stole to the pile of baggage and spelled out the

name on a label: "THOMAS BURKE, ESQ." He read, whistled, stole back, and spread the news.

"It 's Tommy Burke," said one to another; "Tommy Burke home from the States — begob!"

The news, to the admirers of His Magnificence, brought a sense of relief if not of disappointment. He was no potentate, then, after all. Sure they knew the man; he was only one of themselves; sure they minded the day he went; did n't he come from Gorteen over there? Was n't his ould mother and his brother James living there in the ould place still? Ay! But who 'd have thought it! for his kind never did much good in the world. Powerful, powerful! Sure it 's a grand country, ay!

"It 's an ojus pile, y'ur honour," said the porter, touching his cap. "Ye 'll want a car?"

The car-driver stepped forward.

"There 's one outside, sur, from the hotel, sur," said he. "Mebbe ye 'd be wantin' to put up?"

His Magnificence eyed the two loftily.

"Yaas," drawled he, and looked at the luggage; "yaas — reckon it 'll want movin'." He

waved his hand. "Send it on; send it on — you'll see the address. — Naw, naw, Jehu; naw, naw, I want none o' your tarnation hearses. Reckon I'll foot it."

The crowd divided. His Magnificence condescended to walk. The crowd closed in behind him, followed him through the station, past the hotel car, and up the slope towards Bunn town.

Already the word had spread. Bunn was out, waiting, watching, shouting the news.

"Here he is! Be the Holy! Look at the watch-chain on him! *An'* the rings! Och! an' the clothes av him! An' that's Tommy Burke? Aw now, now! Sure it's wonderful — sure it's an ojus country for money — ay! ay!"

Tommy, as he leisurely marched up the street pretending a profound interest in the houses and shops, took his reception calmly. He had reckoned upon making an impression. It was his due. He heard his name whispered as he passed, heard the criticisms on his raiment and appearance, saw the faces right and left at the doors before him, and heard the swelling chorus of comment behind as Bunn left the doors, spread across the street, and gave play to its

tongue and excitement. It was his due. Every one knew him; all had no doubt heard of his success in Chicago. It was natural. But *he?* He knew no one. He had forgotten every one. Phew! the stink — that darned turf smoke. Such a God-forsaken hole of a town! — rags, dirt, laziness. Think of Chicago and think of Bunn! Why, he himself could buy out the whole place neck and crop. What pavements! What littered streets, — pigs, fowls, dogs, dirty brats, women, men! What stores — merciful heavens!

Really His Magnificence might well have been less critical: not very many years had gone since the days when he himself, in rags and tatters, had hawked turf from door to door through that very street.

So His Magnificence, all glorious without, all scornful disgust within, marched on, past the market-house, down Main Street, over the big stone bridge, — from which, had he cared to look, he would have seen the river tumbling gloriously among the boulders and rushing carelessly past a world of quiet beauty on its banks, — went on along the road that leads to Gorteen; leaving Bunn excited behind him, and raising its

voice in wonder that such a personage could allow himself to walk humbly through the dust.

"Ach," said Bunn, "sure he might ha' had a poster. Ah! but mebbe he does n't want to be too grand goin' to the ould mother — ay, ay! Well, God speed him! But it's a power o' good some o' them fine clothes 'd do the same mother — ah, now!"

His Magnificence was walking, first, because he wished to impress the natives along the way; and next, because he wanted to take stock, leisurely, of the half-forgotten country of his birth.

How did it compare with the land of wealth and freedom? H'm! — paltry, neglected, God-forsaken, thought His Magnificence. No enterprise, no capital, no anything, — just the same as when he had left it, just the same. Little fields smothered all round with big hedges, rushes, whins, spade labour, marshes, bogs, naked wretched houses, struggling starved peasantry, — these are what he saw, these only. He had no eyes for the wild beauty of the hills crowding away towards his Majesty the mountain, for the peaceful wind of the stream flowing between the reeds and bulrushes along meadows and

fields, past the great pointed alders and the grazing cattle; the dappled blue sky above, and the rich tinted earth below — how could Tommy have eyes for all this? He was a citizen, a hunter of the dollar; trade, pavements, smoke, dust, these were his kind: all that was nothing, there was no money in it.

Yet the country through which he was marching was the country of his birth; it had reared him well and given him a good start in health and brains. He might have condescended to look kindly on it, His Magnificence might, and to feel a little thrill of emotion as he came gradually on scenes and places which recalled his boyhood. He had done well away from the old country — it was none the worse for that; he had friends still lingering in its fields and homes; his old mother and his one brother were over in Gorteen; it was not so bad that he did not care to come back to it, just for a holiday, to see his mother, to let people admire him and his, to —

A little white house, perched on the brow of a hill, away over Thrasna River in the land of Gorteen, caught his eye. He stopped dead; gazed at the house awhile; then, with his head down, walked on. *Bessie Darling*, he was think-

ing — *Bessie Darling*, is she there now, over there in that white cottage beyond Thrasna River?

He looked up again. How often he had gone up that hill; how often had he sat inside those white walls by the cheery hearthstone! *Bessie*, *Bessie* — he wondered how time and the world had used her. He was fond of her — once, he remembered. It was on this very road, he remembered, going home one day from Bunn Fair — a little elated and reckless, because of Bunn whisky, perhaps — that he had asked her to marry him. Had he asked her or only hinted? He forgot. Anyway he had promised at the parting to come back from America to fetch her.

Well, he had come. Tommy Burke was ever a man of his word, — he had come back faithful to his promise. . . . To fetch her? Ah! that was another matter. Circumstances had altered things. . . . Curious how she had dropped out of his mind! Once he had written, long ago; once had she written long ago; then came work — work and success. Once or twice, years ago, he had thought of her — once or twice. . . . Where was she now? he wondered; had she

forgotten him, or was she still waiting for him to come and fetch her? Oh! he hoped not. Suppose she were waiting over there for him; suppose she held him to his promise. Great Jupiter! Tommy Burke marry a lump of a country colleen! She used to be fair and sweet; half the country had been jealous of him. Yes, but that was years ago. What was she now? Bah! Absurd. She might go to Jerusalem. He could break his promise, — yes, and pay for breaking it. Yes, siree!

He raised his head, and, looking across the fields, tried to fall again into his old, complacent, critical groove. But, somehow, the effort did not succeed. His eyes would wander towards the white house on the hill. The name *Bessie* would sing in his ears. He foresaw possible trouble. The glory that had shone on him for a while in Bunn somehow shone no longer. No longer did he watch for the effect of his presence on the yokels who met him, nor half turn his head to catch a glimpse of their open-eyed stare as they turned and gazed after him. He stamped his foot on the stones.

"Damn it!" he said. "Why did I come back to this cursed country?"

He crossed Thrasna River and entered the land of Gorteen — that land of wisdom which eternally is honoured in calling Tommy son. Here things took a better and more familiar aspect, and the spirits of Tommy became less of a burden. Bilboa, through which he had just passed — Pah! he remembered it was a nest of rebels; no wonder it was a wilderness. But Gorteen was fairer, and its people were children of loyalty and worth, if not of wealth. The cottages, here and there, with their gardens and orchards, were pleasant to look upon; the hedges were often trim, the fields within them not a reproach. Poverty was everywhere; yes, poverty or next thing above it; still, it was not sluggards' poverty; there were everywhere signs of a hard patient struggle against adversity. But Tommy Burke was fast regaining his magnificence. He shook himself inside his well-filled raiment as he mounted a ditch and looked across the hedge at a field of young corn.

"Good God!" he said half aloud; "what is it at its best? Why do people stay on and struggle in this unfortunate country? Why can't they leave it, and do like me?"

He shook his head; it was inexplicable. Why had he left it? he thought. Brains, he answered, brains had led him. Why did his mother choose to stay on in it rather than come to him in America? He had asked her more than once — he did not choose to remember that the asking her was all he had ever done for her — why had she chosen to stay on there in poverty, living with his brother in their hut on their bit of wilderness? Old associations — love of the land? Ah! to glory with such talk. . . . He would have to sleep in that hut to-night, eat there — Ah! he would drive back and sleep in Bunn —

"Morra," came loudly across the road behind him; "that 's a brave crop now."

The voice was familiar. His Magnificence turned: there in a field across the road stood big Ned Nolan and his son James, leaning on their shovels and gazing curiously at him from the potato furrows.

"Why," said Ned, throwing down his shovel and starting forward, wiping his palm on his breeches. "No! — begob it is! Arrah, how 's yourself, Tommy, me boy? Welcim back, me son, to the ould country! Why, ye stand it

rightly — begob! the best." He gave Tommy's hand a squeeze that made him wince. "Och! boys, O boys!" Ned went on, "but you 're changed! — not the same man at all, at all — dear, oh dear! Hoi, James! come here, ye boy ye! here 's Tommy Burke back from the States."

James slouched out of his furrow, bashfully took Tommy's hand, and stood back, mutely admiring, whilst his father roared out the country-side news for the last five years and more, — all who had died, who married, who changed farms, and so on.

"Ay, ay," said Ned, "powerful changes — powerful. But the ould mother beyant stands it rightly — aw the best. I need n't tell ye, av coorse," Ned went on, looking sideways at Tommy, "that Bessie Darlin' 's married — eh? Ye did n't know! Well now, well now! — Away! married an' doin' well. An' ye did n't know? Sure I thought — "

His Magnificence turned the talk. The news was good; he could have given Ned a dollar because of it; his heart was jumping; the sky had cleared: still, he could not allow Ned Nolan to be familiar or to draw conclusions.

He gave out, for quick circulation round the country-side, a few facts about himself and his estate; set the mouth of Ned's son James wider agape with a few observations on the glories of Chicago; then shook the clay from his boots and took again to the road.

Ned and James went back to the potato furrows, leant thoughtfully on their shovels, and watched Tommy make his way up the *boreen* that led to his mother's cottage.

"Jist to think o' that," said Ned, and shook his head; "rowlin' in money, an' I mind the day ye could count the ribs o' him through his tatters! Man! James, did ye see yon watch-chain? Sure it's as thick as a cart tether — an' it's *goold!* An' the rings av him! Och, och!"

"Ay," said James, "th' ould mother 'll go daft over him — ay! I dunno but mebbe Bessie Darlin' 'd better ha' waited a while afore marryin' — ay!"

Ned turned and winked at James.

"You 're right there, James," said he; "ay — an' d'ye mind the liar he is, pretendin' he did n't know she was married! Could n't I see he was cut about it, him pullin' me up that

short — troth, ay! Well, fire away at that furrow; sure I must g' way home an' tell Mary the news."

Meanwhile His Magnificence was picking his way along the *boreen;* not swearing overmuch at the ruts and the puddles; nor yet letting his heart beat swiftly because of the surprise he was about to spring on his old mother, not even raising his head that he might look out over the fields or catch a glimpse of the home of his youth there in front. Why should he look? Did he not know that the lane he was stepping through, and the fields around him, and the house before him, were just as they had ever been and just as they would ever remain? Yes; and, for the rest, was he not walking with his thoughts?

Bessie's married, he kept thinking — *Bessie's married;* and his little heart was glad. For the last time but one that day, he was His Magnificence every inch of him. Trouble had fled. He could enjoy himself now; air his splendour about the country; do something for his people; betake himself to his own country when he felt so disposed. He thanked his Maker Bessie was married.

How was it he had never heard? His brother had written once or twice, without saying anything. How was it? Oh, forgot perhaps, — or felt that the news would be of no interest. She had been married for years, Ned said. For years? Ha! how soon she had forgotten him! Woman's constancy! Bah! *He* had not married — no! *He* had come back single — yes! And perhaps had she been single and clean, and decent, and not vulgar, and had not gone off too much, he might — who knew? Ah! if she only knew — great Scott! — only *knew* what she had missed. Missed him — missed Chicago, and wealth, and position, and all the rest! If she only knew — yes, and she *should* know, soon too, what her hurry and promise-breaking had done for her. Yes, siree!

By this His Magnificence had steered himself safely up the *boreen*, and had passed the gate, just then lying wrecked on the ditch against the hedge, which on rare occasions had been known to keep goats and swine from invading the precincts of the home of all the Burkes. Was he magnificent still? Hardly. Twenty yards off was his old mother. Did his heart

leap even now? Perhaps so, — one thinks not.

He crossed the noisome tract which lay between the unsightliness of the byre on the one hand and the unsavouriness of the dunghill on the other, daintily stepped through the hens and ducks over the dirty-puddled yard, and came to the door of his old home.

At the threshold he paused and looked round. Just the same — just the same — dirt, slatternliness, poverty — the Burkes were ever good-for-nothings. He was, he reflected, the only well-doer of them all — Pah!

He lifted the latch, and poked his head into the smoke.

"Mrs. Burke!" he shouted. "Does Mrs. Burke live here?"

"Who 's that?" came back. "Who are ye?"

"A strainger," said Tommy. "Are you Mrs. Burke?"

"Yis — yis," said his mother as she came towards the door. "Why — why — why — Ah God! ah God! it 's Tommy — ah me son, me son! Aw — aw — aw!"

The next moment a pair of old yellow arms

were round His Magnificence, and willy-nilly he was dragged by the neck into the smoke and gloom of the home of his ancestors. Really, it served His Magnificence right.

One can hardly say that Tommy was happy as he sat one side of the hearth-stone, in a straight-backed arm-chair, staring gloomily at the black tea-drawer boiling on the coals and the bacon frizzling on the pan — Oh, what a dinner! thought he — whilst his old mother held his hand, crooned over him, and by the score showered on him questions about himself and his welfare.

He answered dolefully, evasively; how could he answer otherwise, sitting in such a den, surrounded by such poverty, choked by such smoke, all the time very well aware that his splendour was down in the dirt, — down in the dirt with his own mother, where he had been born, and where, all the years of his well-doing, he had suffered his mother to remain?

How could he talk freely to her of his wealth and his trade and his friends? His moral perception was not very delicate; but it was sufficiently awake to give him the impression that to speak of these things was almost to

reproach himself. Besides, she would not understand — better unfold his tale gradually. She was old and crotchety; perhaps — and God knows it was the basest thought Thomas Burke's little soul ever bred — she might reproach him, taunt him, point at him and then at herself, and mutter hard things about selfishness and ingratitude. How could he answer except dolefully and evasively?

Truly the day's passing was not bringing added splendour to His Magnificence.

Presently his mother let go his hand, and rose to get the dinner. Phew! — the smoke, the stuffiness, the gloom.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, mother," he cried, "open the door, the window — anything, and give me air. I 'll choke."

"Ah, aisy, me son," said his mother, as she tottered to open the door, "aisy — whisht! — it 's nothin'; it 's only them fools o' turf, all wet they are. Come, sit over now, an' ate."

Tommy looked at the bare, littered table in disgust, and the strong coarse food thereon. His soul revolted; his manhood sickened; he gulped down a few mouthfuls; then, declaring he had no appetite, threw down his knife and

fork, lit a cigar, and pulled his chair nearer the open door.

"You never sent me word about Bessie Darling's marriage, mother!" he said.

"Och no. Sure James wrote seldom; I forgot to tell him. How did ye find out?"

"H'm! Reckon ye did n't forget, mother. Who 's the man? Any one I know?"

"Why, sure ye know. Did n't ye hear? Francy Phillips there beyant on the hill."

"Ah! Married long?"

"Och ay — this — this years an' years. Sure, she 's four childer already. Tommy," his mother said, as she tottered forward and clutched his arm, "ye missed her well, dear. What 'd the likes o' you, wi' all that property, do wi' the likes o' her? I was *rejoiced* to hear av her goin' — rejoiced now. But sure ye niver cared much for her. Why should I tell ye?"

True, thought Tommy, true; why should he know? He had missed her well. Still, how soon she had forgotten him. Ah! if she only knew what *she* had missed. She should know; and at once.

"Yaas — no doubt — yaas," he replied to his

mother. "Waal, I reckon I 'll take a look around. Go and see James, perhaps. Find him in the bog, I suppose?"

Under pretence of going to see his brother, just then busy at the turf, Tommy crossed the fields, made a circuit of the bog, climbed a hill, and boldly opened the gate of Francis Phillips' garden.

The walk was trim, the flower-beds orderly, the cottage neat; he rapped at a green door with a brass knocker. He heard a sudden bustle inside, saw a face pressed for an instant against the parlour window: the door opened, and his old love stood before him.

Ah! thought His Magnificence, thank Heaven. She was every inch an Irish farmer's wife — stout, bare-armed, fresh-complexioned, dressed in a loose bodice, a quilted petticoat, heavy boots, and wearing an old straw hat over her black rough hair.

"Good afternoon," said His Magnificence, as he raised his hat.

"Good evenin', sir."

"Are you Mrs. Phillips?"

"Yes, sir." His Magnificence swelled himself.

"Aow — well, I 'm Thomas Burke, just home from America, ye know."

Mrs. Phillips bit her lip, reddened a little, made a pluck at her apron — then put out her hand.

"Faith an' you 're welcim, Mister Burke," said she. "Sorra bit o' me knew ye at first. Sure it 's good o' ye to come to see me. Come in, now, come in!"

She led the way — and as she went His Magnificence was not less thankful to Heaven for his deliverance from her well-worn charms at sight of the size and shape of her hob-nailed boots clattering along beneath her milk-stained petticoat — through the narrow earth-floored hall, just then heavy with smoke and kitchen odours, into the little earth-floored parlour, where the atmosphere struck close and smoky; dragged forward a chair, and asked him to sit down.

An' this is Tommy, thought Bessie, as, pulling off her hat and seating herself before him, she let her eye take in fully the details of his person — his jewelery, fine linen, fatness, gray hairs. Troth the world has used him well, thought she. What has he come for? To throw taunts at

one, I suppose? Well, let him! Why did he go an' leave me?

"Ye stand it well, Mister Burke," said she. "But now you 're odious changed. I wid n't ha' known ye."

"Yaas," drawled His Magnificence; "reckon I am — it 's a good while since you last saw me."

Ah! now it 's coming, thought Bessie.

"Aw, 'deed it is," she said, "'deed it is — years an' years. Here am I an ould married woman since that — ay, ay!"

She was giving His Magnificence every chance; better get it over, thought she.

"Yaas — heard about you from some one along the road, I think," drawled His Magnificence. "Congratulate you. Yaas, reckon I am changed, some. Not married myself — yet; but I 've done some hard work since I left this caountry — left something considerable behind me when I started across the herring-pond."

Bessie peered hard at him under her half-closed eyelids. She could not follow his drift. Is n't he going to say a word to me, thought she, about myself at all?

"Ah, yes," said she.

His Magnificence looked slowly all round the

room — at the old yellow engravings in their wide walnut frames hanging against the damp-streaked walls; at the woollen antimacassars worked in orange and blue hanging over the painted chairs; at the flaring oleograph of King William over the mantelpiece, flanked on either side by dim old photographs in metal frames; at the artificial flowers on the big Bible on the table; at the half open cupboard, inside which stood a whisky bottle among the best crockery-ware; at the geraniums in the window-recess — Lord! what vulgarity, he thought.

He looked at Bessie; and behind his eyes she saw scornful disgust.

"You 've a pretty little place here, I guess, Mrs. Phillips," he said, and waved his jewelled hand.

"Ah, now," said she, "not so bad, thank God — sure I could ha' been worse. But it 's a poor place to sit the likes o' *you*, Mr. Burke; sure ye can't be well used to it, now?"

"Naw," replied his thick-skinned Magnificence, "p'raps not. I reckon in Chicago City I 've a fine house and plenty in it. My furniture and fixings I calc'late would work out to a pretty high figure. My pictures an' statoos cost me, I

guess, some hundreds of dollars. Two domestics I keep — yaas."

"Do ye now?" quoth Bessie, whose tongue was itching to mimic his affected Yankee drawl. "Troth, that's great — and sure you're a great man, Mr. Burke."

"Yaas — out there'll you find my waggons and my men in the streets, and my firm is pretty well known by now, I reckon. I stand straight on my feet — yaas. I guess my income just now figures out to some few thousand dollars. I've just come across for a little holiday trip, ye knaow, Mrs. — a — Phillips — just to see the old mother, ye knaow, an' some old friends. My baggage, I guess, is coming from the station just naow."

He pulled out his watch and rubbed his fat fingers lovingly round its gold case; then twisted his rings, pulled his cuffs down till the links flashed, and spread his hands over his knees. Words could not have said plainer: Look at me, Bessie Darling; look at me, and gnash your teeth.

Bessie folded her arms and sat firmly before him. Ah! ye big, fat, lying blaggard, ye, she thought — this is what you've come for! Try-

ing to make little of me and show me what I did for myself. Thank the Lord! I found a better man than ye. Sure I always doubted ye. Maybe if ye went an' gave some o' your money to your ould mother over there it would n't hurt her. Ye selfish, thick-headed, ould bull! Sure it 's throwing good words away to talk to ye. But you 're not going to sit there and lord it over me — no, not if I know it.

"Yis," she said in her fluent, good-humoured way, "I heard talk you were doin' well, Mister Burke — not that it mattered to *me;* but sure one can't help people talkin'. Och! now it 's little time one has for talk. What wi' *all* the pigs we have, an' *all* the cattle, *an'* the ducks, *an'* geese; an' makin' the butter — now one 's little time to clack about any one's affairs, much less strangers'. Th' other day, over rides Lord Louth an' sits down there just where you 're sittin', Mister Burke, an' says he: 'Faith, Mrs. Phillips, you 're a lucky woman, so y' are, with the fine man you 've got,' says he, 'an' the industrious. You 've the best farm, Mrs. Phillips,' says he, 'an' the best stocked farm in the whole property.' Ah! troth he made me blush, so he did; an' it was truth he said, so it was. Ay!

Ivery day on me two knees I thank God for all His mercies."

"Yaas," said Tommy, "yaas."

"Ay! Lord Louth's the pleasantest gentleman," Bessie rattled on. "Sure, he often comes to see us. Ay! a rale gentleman he is — a *rale* gentleman! He comes in jist dressed like one av ourselves — not a ring on him or a hate; an' he sits as 'umble there before us, Mister Burke, as one's own brother. Ay! an' he 'll take tay from me — Mr. Burke, och! what ails me? Sure, I must be dreamin'! Wid ye take a cup o' tay from me? Sure, I 'll make it in no time — now do! I 've the finest butter an' crame — the best in Irelan'; an' I 'll whip ye up a bit o' flim cake in no time — och, do!"

"Oh, no," said Tommy; "I must be goin'. I promised mother to be back in an hour."

He fumbled with his hat, coughed, and prepared to rise.

"Ah, wait an' see Francy — ah, do!" pleaded Bessie. "Now he 'll be vexed if he does n't see ye. He 'll want to show ye the land, an' the cattle, an' iverything. Well, you 'll come again — now won't ye? Sure, one likes to see ould friends. Whisht! here 's the childer home from school."

She rapped at the window and brought two boys and a little girl through the garden to the front door. "Come in, childer," said she, "an' see who 's here — a whole live gentleman all the way from America. Now, are n't they fine childer, Mr. Burke? Look at the limbs on them, and them *that* healthy! Ay, indeed! An' sure the master spakes right well o' their doin's at school. Sam here 's in the third class already, an' Bob there 's out o' the first book." She ran her fingers through her little daughter's flaxen hair, and stooped and kissed her rosy cheeks. "Bell here 's the darlin' child — ivery one likes her, don't they, Bell? Whisht! me child, sure, the fine gentleman won't hurt ye — he 's only Mr. Burke from America — ye know his mammy, don't ye, that lives in the wee house over the bog?"

"Iss," answered Bell; "clatty ould Mother Burke."

Bessie put her hand tenderly over the child's mouth, then looked straight at Tommy.

"Ye mus' n't mind childer, Mr. Burke," said she. "Ye know they pick up all kinds o' talk at school. But they 're the powerful blessin', so they are — och, sure, I would n't live widout

them! — What's that, Sam? Spake out, me son!"

"I say, mother," said Sam in an awed whisper, "what makes him wear his Sunday clothes on a week-day?"

"Ay, an' mother," chimed in Bob, "look at the big stumuck av — "

"Whisht!" cried Bessie, "whisht! where's your manners? I'm fair 'shamed o' ye both, so I am!"

Somehow Tommy felt uncomfortable; he rose quickly and said he must be going.

"Well, if you're goin,' Mr. Burke," said Bessie, as she put out her hand, "I suppose I mus'n't keep ye. Thank ye, all the same, for comin' to see me — sure it isn't every one 'd come to see an' ould friend first day home from foreign parts. But you'll come again soon an' see Francy? He'll be powerful glad to know all about that gran' house o' yours over the water — he cares to know more about that kind o' thing than I do. Sure, what 'd the likes o' me know about such grandeur? Good-bye, Mr. Burke."

His Magnificence went down the garden somewhat crestfallen; somehow he felt that his visit had not been a success.

He opened the gate, and whilst it was on the swing the voice of Sam the irrepressible came clear from behind.

"Mother," said Sam, "what in glory does the lad wear at the end o' that big brass chain?"

His Magnificence gave the gate a vicious pull and turned away in wrath.

But Bessie pulled the children into the hall, shut the door, put her hands on her hips, leant back against the wall, and laughed till the tears came.

They that Mourn.

They that Mourn.

BUNN MARKET was over its hurry and haggle. In corners and quiet spots of the big market-yard you saw men and women carefully counting their little stores of silver, testing the coins with their teeth, knotting them firmly in red pocket-handkerchiefs, finally stowing them away in their long, wide pockets as cautiously as though every sixpence were a diamond. In the streets, people were leisurely moving towards the shops, where tills were rattling and counters teeming, and trade, for a few hours, flourishing, after its whole six days of blissful stagnation.

A cart laden with butter, chiefly in firkins, issued from the market-yard gate, a man between the shafts, one at either wheel, two pulling behind, all noisily endeavouring to keep the cart from running amuck downhill into the river. Close behind, like chief mourners after a hearse,

one might fancy, came Tim Kerin and Nan, his wife — a battered, slow-footed couple, heavily burdened with the big load of their years, white-haired, both of them, and lean as grayhounds. Heavily they shuffled along in their clumsy boots; the man with one arm across his back, the other swinging limply; the woman holding up her skirt with one hand, and gripping with the other the handle of a big empty basket; both looking fixedly over the tail-board of the cart at the few pounds of butter for which they had slaved hard for weeks, and for which, after hours of haggling, they had just received a few most precious shillings. Fixedly they watched it, and mournfully, almost, as though they were bidding it a last farewell.

They passed through the gate, straggled across the footpath, and silently watched the cart zigzag down the street, run presently along the kerb, and, amid great shouting, discharge its contents into the packing-house.

"Faith!" said Tim, across his shoulder, "'t was cliverly done. I wonder, some day, they don't break their necks." He wagged his head dubiously; Nan tucked up her skirt; the two turned their faces uphill, and set out to

share their profits with the shops. The butter was gone, and sorrow go with it! — 't was a heartbreak.

Tim Kerin's share of the profits was a shining sixpence, reluctantly tendered to him by Nan his wife, who now walked a couple of steps behind him, with eighteenpence shut tight in her hand and the remainder of the butter-money (only a shilling or two) tied fast in a cotton bag and safely stowed away in the neck of her linsey-woolsey dress. Threepence of Tim's sixpence was to buy tobacco, a penny might go in the purchase of a weekly newspaper, a penny would buy a pair of "whangs" (leather laces) for his boots; the penny remaining, when all those luxuries had been honestly paid for, would buy a whole tumblerful of frothing porter. A whole tumblerful! At sight of it, with his mind's eye, Tim's lips dried and his feet went quicker over the cobble-stones.

Nan's lips were tight, her brow wrinkled. She was figuring. It would take her to be powerful 'cute to fill her basket with the value of eighteenpence. Och! the lot o' things she wanted: tea, sugar, bacon, a herring for the Sunday's dinner, a bit o' white bread, and —

and supposing there were a penny or two over (with knowing bargaining there might be), was it likely now that Mr. Murphy, the draper, would let her have cheap a yard of narrow soiled lace to go round the border of her night-caps? Twopence might do, threepence would be sure to —. Aw, glory be to goodness! did anybody ever hear of such romancin', such extravagance; sure it was running wild her wits were! Threepence for lace indeed!

A friend stepped from behind a cart and caught Nan by the arm. What, was it pass a neighbour like that, Mrs. Kerin would do? Pass her ouldest friend, Mrs. Brady, as if she was a milestone, and never pass the time of day, or tell how she sold her butter, or how the world was using herself!

"Och, och, Mrs. Kerin," moaned Mrs. Brady, "what have I done to ye, at all, at all?"

Nan stopped and put out her hand, then volubly began explaining; sure, sorrow the sight of Mrs. Brady she had seen; sure, she never passed a neighbour without spaking; sure, 't was walkin' along romancin' she was, figurin' in her head, seeing how far she could make the few shillings go. "An' how are you,

ma'am?" asked Nan, when full pardon for her oversight had been generously given and gratefully received. "How are you, an' all your care?"

Swiftly the two old heads bobbed together; ceaselessly their tongues began to wag; freely the full tide of their softly drawling speech flowed gurgling round the little nothings of their little world.

Meanwhile, Tim, his sixpence hot in his palm, had taken a turn through the throng of the streets, had questioned his neighbours about sales and prices (just as though he were a man of stomach and capital), had spelt out the time on the big market-house clock as he stood by the town pump listening to the hoarse drone of a ballad-singer; and now, on the side-walk of Main Street, stood dreamily looking through a shop-window at a pile of newspapers which stood precariously among an array of tobacco-pipes and sweet-bottles. If he bought a paper, Tim was thinking, he would have a whole week's diversion o' nights; if he did n't buy it, he would save the price of another tumblerful o' — A heavy hand fell on his shoulder.

"Hello! Tim," said his neighbour, Shan

Grogan; "havin' a wee squint at the sugar-sticks, is it ye are?"

"Aw ay," answered Tim, turning; "aw ay! I was just lookin' at the papers there, an' wonderin' what an ojus lot o' news they give us nowadays for a penny. Enough to keep one goin' for a week."

"Yis," said Shan, "it's a wonderful world. But aisy, Tim; ha' ye been to the Post lately?"

"Naw," said Tim.

"Well, look in there if you 're passin,' me son. The lassie that sells the stamps asked me to tell ye. Gwan quick; mebbe she'll give ye news for nothin'."

"Now, now," answered Tim; "I 'm obliged to ye, Shan, I 'm obliged to ye. Now, now," he repeated to himself, as he shuffled off along the pavement; "now, now. Is Shan havin' a wee joke, I wonder?" he said, and, coming to the post-office, doubtfully sidled in.

"Me name is Kerin, miss," he said to the clerk, very humbly as to one of the representatives of mighty Government itself; "Tim, for Christian; an' they tell me ye'd mebbe be havin' somethin' for me?"

The girl handed him a letter bearing the

Chicago post-mark stamped in one of its bottom corners, and carrying its address thence right up to the top of the envelope. Tim bore it tenderly to the door and carefully inspected it, then took it back to the counter.

"Whose countersign might that be, miss, if ye please?" he asked, and placed his thumb over the post-mark. Humbly he asked; curtly he was answered.

"Chicago?" said Tim. "Ay, ay! I'm obliged to ye, miss — I'm obliged to ye. May the Lord be good to ye an' send ye a duke for a husband! Good-day to ye, miss," said he, then stepped out into the street with his hand deep in his pocket and the letter in his hand, and went off in search of Nan.

"It's from Padeen," he kept thinking to himself, as he walked joyfully along, his feet clattering loosely on the pavement, his old face turning here and there, watching for his wife; "it's from Padeen, sure as ever was!" Aw! but he was glad. Aw! but Nan would be glad. So long it was, ages and ages ago, since they heard from him. 'T was n't Padeen's handwrite — naw! but sure it might have altered; everything altered in the Big Country. Ay!

'twas only poor ould Ireland that kept the same — never any worse, never any better. But where was Nan? Sure, she ought to be in the shops. He was dying to find her. Up and down he went; at last found her, still bobbing heads at the top of Bridge Street with her friend, Mrs. Brady.

"Aw, it 's here ye are, Nan?" he said, coming up. "An' me huntin' the town for ye. It 's yourself is well, Mrs. Brady, I 'm hopin'? That 's right, that 's right."

His voice came strangely broken and shrill; his eyes danced like a child's; still his hand gripped the letter in his pocket.

"What 's the matter, Tim?" whispered Nan. "Ha' ye heard news?"

"Ay, ay," he said. "Come away till I tell ye; come away."

He turned, and, with Nan at his heels, set off almost at a run down-hill towards the river. Aw, but his heart was thumpin'! "Aisy, Tim," cried Nan, behind him; "aisy, man, or me breath — me breath —"

Without answering, or slackening his pace, Tim went on, turned through the butter-market gate, crossed the empty yard, came to the

furthermost corner of one of the long, low sheds, and there halted, with his face to the wall. Aw! but his heart was thumpin'. Presently, Nan came to him, panting and flurried.

"What is it, Tim?" she asked; "what is it?"

Slowly Tim brought out his letter, and, holding it by both hands, let his wife look at it.

"It 's — it 's from Padeen!" cried she; "it 's from Padeen!"

"Yis," said Tim. "It 's not his hand-write, but it must be from him."

"Aw, glory be to God!" cried Nan. "Glory to God! Sure, it 's ages since we heard from the boy, ages!"

She put down her basket, and, with her head between Tim's shoulder and the wall, looked fixedly at the envelope. Aw! but she was glad to see it. Such a time it was since they had heard from Padeen! A whole two years it was, come Christmas, since the last letter came, with that money-order in it, an' the beautiful picture of Padeen himself, dressed out in his grand clothes, with a gold chain across his waistcoat, and a gold ring on his finger. A whole two years almost. And now maybe —?

"Aw, Tim, open it quick," she panted; "open it quick!"

"Mebbe," said Tim, "we 'd better wait till we get home. The light 's bad, an' — "

"No, no, Tim; no, no; it 'd kill me to wait."

"Ay?" said Tim, then slowly drew his knife from his pocket and tenderly cut open the top of the envelope. His fingers trembled greatly as he fumbled with the enclosure. Nan's hand went quick to her heart.

"Aw, quick, Tim!" she cried. "Quick, quick!"

"Don't — don't flooster me, woman," said Tim. "I can't — can't — " The next moment his shaking old fingers held a sheet of note-paper, and a black-edged card on which glared out a long silvern cross, and beneath it, in large letters, the words: PATRICK KERIN.

Nan fell back a step; her fingers clutched at her dress over her heart. Tim's knife clattered upon the stones, and the envelope fluttered down. For a while they stood there silent, dread-stricken. At last Nan spoke.

"Read, Tim," she said. "Read!"

"I — I can't."

"Ye must, Tim; it's better. Let us know the worst, for God's sake!"

"I — I —" Tim began; then quickly opened the sheet. "It's — it's too dark here," he mumbled. "I — I want me specs."

"Read what ye can, Tim, an' quick, for God's sake!"

So Tim, still with his face to the wall, raised the letter to catch the light, and began to read —

Chicago City, U. S. A.

DEAR — DEAR MISTER KERIN — *It is my — my sad duty to in-form you that your son Patrick died* ["Aw, Padeen, Padeen!"] *of ty — typhus here on the 2nd of this month at twelve o'clock a. m.* ["God's mercy!" cried Nan.] *As his oldest friend, I was with him at the end. He died in peace. He was buried, at his request, in —— Cemetery. I — I send you something to — to keep. . . .*

"Aw, I can read no more," said Tim with a groan; "it's too dark. I can read no more. Me poor ould Padeen!"

Nan turned and looked vacantly across at the busy street, dry-eyed and gray-faced. Ah! her poor Padeen, dead and buried away among the strangers, dead and buried, and never, never

would she see him again, never hear his voice, never grip his hand! Dead, dead! her big, handsome, noble son. . . .

She turned to Tim and caught him by the sleeve.

"Come away, Tim," she said. "Come away wi' me."

"Aw! Nan, Nan," he said, as the big tears sprang to his eyes. "Nan, me girl, but it's hard!"

"Aw, yis," said she, and lifted her basket; "but come away, Tim, come away. Home's the best place for us."

"Yis," said Tim, wiping his eyes with his hand. "Yis, Nan;" then, Nan leading the way, and Tim shuffling after, the two old people (mourners now in real earnest) crossed the yard; and at the gate Nan halted.

"I think," said she, as Tim came up, "I think we can manage this week wi'out the bits o' groceries. Sure, they're only luxuries, anyway. I'll go an' see if Mr. Murphy can find me a bit o' crape for me bonnet."

"Do," said Tim. "Do, Nan; an' when you're about it," he said, taking his sixpence from his pocket and handing it to her, "ye may

as well get me a bit for me hat. Ay! sure I can do wi'out me tabaccy for one week. Aw, yis! Away quick, Nan; an' hurry back, me girl."

So Nan turned up towards the market-house; but Tim went down-hill towards the bridge; and when, presently, Nan came to him, carrying her little packet of crape in her big basket, Tim's head was bowed over the parapet, and he was mumbling tearfully. "Aw, me poor Padeen!"

Nan plucked at his sleeve.

"Come away home, Tim," she said, "come away." And at the word Tim raised his head, dried his eyes, and set off slowly after Nan up the long dusty road that wearily led towards home.

The Rival Swains.

The Rival Swains.

WE left the Bunn Road, turned down-hill towards Curleck, passed a great, stone-walled farmhouse set nakedly on the hill-side, whirled through a little oak plantation and across a single-arched bridge; then suddenly came to a stretch of level sandy road with broad grass margins on either hand and willow hedges, and, beyond these, low-lying tracts of pasture and meadow-land that ran on the one side along Thrasna River, and extended on the other back to the shores of Clackan Lough.

A beautiful country it is just there, half-way from the Stonegate to Curleck woods, well-wooded and watered, green and smiling, with white farmhouses scattered plentifully over its face, and dark patches of crop-land here and there between the hedges, and round all, dim and blue, the mighty ring of giant mountains.

But, like a true son of the soil and owner of a high-stepping horse, my friend James Hicks had more eye for the road and its ruts than for the hills and their beauties; nor would he allow many words of mine in praise of the natural beauties of the land to sift through his rustic mind unrebuked. No! to blazes with beauty and colour and the rest! What cared he for such foolery? It was the soil he valued, the hard, practical soil, Sir, not the frippery that spoilt the face of it.

"Fine, ye call it!" he said, and pointed disdainfully with his whip at the big rushy fields beyond the hedge. "I wish to glory ye saw me stick a spade half a foot into the skin of it. Water an' clay, that 's what ye 'd find, an' grass growin' on it that 'd cut ye like razors. Ay! I know it. An' sure there 's good reason for it bein' so. Ye see Thrasna River over there?" said he, and pointed to the right with his whip. "An' ye see Clackan Lough over there?" and he wagged his head to the left. "An' ye remarked that little stream we crossed back there, wi' the bridge over it? Well, if ye look hard at them they 'll tell their own story. Suppose the sky opened there above your head and spouted

rain for six whole days at a time, what 'd happen? Eh? I 'll tell ye. The mountains there beyond 'd send the water roarin' down upon us; the lakes above in Cavan 'd swell an' come slap at us; the hills there 'd do their duty; an' then up rises the river, an' the lake, over comes the water wi' a jump, an' when you 'd be eatin' your supper there 's a lake spread between the hills, an' a canal three feet deep runnin' here over the road between the hedges. Yes, aw I know it! *That 's* the time to see how beautiful the country looks! *That 's* the time to make the farmers kick their heels wi' joy, wi' their hay in wisps, an' their turf in mud, and their potatoes maybe swamped! How comfortable ye 'd feel, now, if ye wanted to get to Curleck, an' ye had no friend to drive ye, an' the water was as deep as your chin on the road, an' — Aw dear, oh dear!" James cried suddenly, and slapped his knee; then, in true Irish fashion, changed his tune quick from dolour to laughter. "Aw dear, oh dear! to think o' that story comin' into me head all at once! Sure it 's wonderful the quare tricks one's brain-box plays one. The quarest thing it was happened along this very road, Sir, one winter's night when the floods were up. But maybe ye

know the story o' George Lunny's stilts, an' what came o' them ?"

I shook my head. So James leant his elbow on the cushion of the car-well, crossed his legs, and having worked his horse into a steady trot, went on with his story.

"'T was a good many years ago that the thing happened, an' 't was in the same winter that the big wind blew the roof off the hay-shed above at Emo. Powerful the flood was at that time, an' four feet deep it lay on this very road; so that if ye wanted to get to Curleck an' had n't a boat, an' had n't time to get round the lake there, ye had to take your life in your fist, tuck up your coat-tails, an' wi' the tops o' the hedges to guide ye, just wade for it. Faith! 't was a funny sight o' market-days to see the ould women comin' along here on their asses' carts wi' their skirts over their ears, an' the water squirtin' out below the tail-board, an' the unfortunate baste of an ass trudgin' unconcernedly through it all wi' its head an' ears showin' above the water; an' a funnier sight 't was at times to see George Lunny an' the rest comin' through it on their stilts. Like ghosts they 'd seem o' times, when dusk was comin'; if a wind was blowin', ye 'd

think they were drunk, that wobbly they 'd be; an' at the deep parts, be the King! but it 's miracles ye 'd think they 'd be at an' walkin' on the water. Anyway, it 's about George I must tell ye.

"He used to work below in the gardens at Lord Louth's — a middle-sized, good-natured kind o' fellow, harmless enough, an' powerful good to the widow mother at home. An' o' course he has a wee girl to go courtin'; an' o' course there 's another man that 's sweet on her too; an' o' course she lived *that* side o' the flood — ye 'll see the house shortly when we get to the woods — an' they lived *this*. So ye 'll see that what wi' crossin' the flood o' nights to see her, an' the trifle o' jealousy between themselves, they had enough to keep them alive through that winter.

"Well, one night when George had had his supper, an' a wash an' shave, he takes his stilts across his shoulder and sets out to see the wee girl, Bessie Bredin by name. 'T was a fine frosty night, wi' a three-quarter moon shinin', an' when George gets to the edge o' the flood there behind at the bridge, who should he see but th' other fellow sittin' on the copin' stones.

"'Aw! good evenin', David' (that bein' the rival's name), says George, restin' his stilts against the bridge-wall an pullin' out his pipe. 'It's a fine night now.'

"'It is so, George,' answers David, not speakin' too friendly-like, still, without any ill-will, for so far it was a fair race between the two. 'It is so.'

"'It's a cowld seat ye've got there this frosty night, David,' says George, strikin' a match.

"'Aw, it is,' answers David. 'I jist daundered down to look at the wild ducks on the wing, an' smoke me pipe.'

"'Ye had n't a notion to cross the flood now, David?' asks George, in his sly way.

"'Aw, no,' says David. 'Aw! not at all.'

"'Ay?' says George, catchin' hold o' his stilts. 'Well, I'm goin' that direction for an hour or so. Anythin' I can do for ye?'

"'Ah, no, George,' says David. 'Ah, no, 'cept I'm sorry I could n't — Well, to tell truth, I *was* thinkin' o' goin' down Curleck way the night. Only Jan Farmer, bad luck take him! has gone off wi' the cot after the ducks, and I can't cross.'

"'Aw,' says George, that sleek an' pitiful, 'that's bad — that's bad. An' ye've no stilts or

anythin'? Och, och, man alive! what were ye thinkin' of? An' sure 't would be an ojus pity to wet them new Sunday trousers o' yours. But, tell ye what, David, I 've a broad back on me, an' a stout pair o' legs, an' the stilts there 'd carry a ton weight — get on me back, an' I 'll carry ye over.'

"Well, at that David hummed an' ha'd a while, an' objected this an' that: he did n't care whether he went or not; he was bigger an' weightier than George (which was true, but not over-weighty for a big lump o' a man like George), an' might strain his back; they might trip over a rut or a stone. An' George just listened quietly to it all an' threw in an odd remark in a careless kind o' way, knowin' well enough that David was dyin' to go, an' that 't was only fear of his skin that hindered him. At last up George gets on the stilts, an' says he —

"'Well, David, me son, good-bye; I 'm sorry I can't stay longer wi' ye, but I 'm expectin' to see some one about eight o'clock. Good-night, David, an' take care o' yourself.' An' at the word up gets David from the wall an' takes a grip o' George's trousers.

"'Aisy,' says he; 'aisy, I 'll go.'

"So George gets alongside the bridge-wall, an' David mounts it an' scrambles on to George's back; an' off the caravan sets through the flood.

"Well, Sir, there begins the game; for George was a masterpiece on the stilts, an' held the whip hand, and David, as the water got closer and closer to his feet, only shivered more an' more, an' gripped George the tighter. First George 'd wobble this side, an' David 'd shout '*Murther!*' Then George 'd wobble that side, an' David 'd roar '*Meila murther!*' Then George 'd splash a drop o' frosty water round David's ankles an' set him shiverin'; then he 'd turn his face round an' say, 'Aw, David, David, me strength 's goin',' an' lek a shaved monkey David 'd shiver on his back an' chatter wi' his teeth. At last, about half-way through, George, whether from pure divilment or spite, I know not — for afterwards he 'd never say — gives a quick lurch on the stilts, jerks his shoulders, an' off David goes into the water — slap in he goes, wi' a roar like a bull, flounders awhile, then rises splutterin', rubs his eyes, an' sets off like a grampus helter-skelter after George. *Whiroo!* there 's where the scene was, an' the *Whillaloo*, an' the splashin' an' swearin'; but at last George gets

to dry land, drops the stilts, an' as hard as he could pelt makes for the girl's house. An' after him, wi' the water streamin' from him like a retriever, goes David as wet as a fish, an' as mad as twenty hatters. 'Aw! may the divil send that I get me hands on ye,' he'd shout, 'till I pull the wizen out o' ye!' An' away in front George'd laugh an' shout back, 'Aw, David, David, spare me, spare me! 'T was all an accident.' So like that they went on along this very road up the Round Hill there, down through the woods below, an' up the lane to the girl's house.

"I happened that night to be makin' a *kaley* in Bredin's kitchen — in troth, I may say at once that if Bessie, the daughter, had looked kindly on meself instead o' George or David, I'd have jumped in me boots — an' was sittin' in the corner holdin' discourse wi' Bredin himself, when the door clatters open an' in comes George pantin' an' blowin'.

"'Aw, aw!' says he, droppin' into a chair an' tryin' to laugh, 'I'll be kilt — I'll be kilt! Big Davy's after me roarin' vengeance. I — I —' then, as well as he could, told us what had happened. 'Here he comes,' says George, risin' to

his feet; an' wi' that the door flings open an' in comes Big David — the woefullest object ye iver clapped eyes on, wi' his hair in his eyes, an' his clothes dreepin', an' his face blue as a blue-bag. He dunders into the kitchen, looks at George, then wi' a shout makes for him. 'Aw, ye whelp ye!' shouts he, 'I 've got ye'; but at that Bredin runs, an' the wife runs, an' I run, an' between us all keep the two asunder. An' all the time Davy keeps roarin' an' strugglin' an' George standin' by the fire keeps sayin': 'Aw, Davy, Davy, 't was only an accident!'

"Well, Sir, after a while we got David calmed down a bit, an' made him promise to be quiet; then away up stairs he goes an' soon comes down decked out in Bredin's Sunday clothes, and sits him down by the fire, wi' Bredin an' myself between him an' George. Faith! 't was a curious sight to see the pair o' them: David glowerin' across the hearthstone wi' his hands spread out to the blaze, an' George wi' his eyes fixed on the kettle, hardly knowin' whether to laugh or grin. Aw! but soon the laugh was th' other side o' his face; for what d' ye think but Bessie, though every one knew she was fondest o' George an' was nearly prom-

ised to him, gave him the back o' her hand that night an' was like honey itself to David! Troth, 't was wonderful! But, sure, women are the curious mortals, any way. Ay! any one that has a wife knows it well. All the fuss she made o' him! 'T was 'David, are ye this?' an' 'David, are ye that?' an' 'David, wid ye like a hot cup o' tea?' till ye 'd think a'most 't was a child o' six she was sootherin'. Down she brings the big arm-chair from the parlour an' sits him in it; nothin 'll do her but he must ha' a glass o' hot punch at his elbow; here she was always turnin' an' twistin' his wet clothes before the fire, an' not a glance would she give poor George at all, sittin' mum wi' his toes in the ashes. Och! not one. An' David, seein' how things were, could hardly keep from shoutin' he was that proud; an' every now an' again he 'd look slyly at George as much as to say: 'Ye 've done for yourself, me son, this time, an' dang your eyes! but it serves ye right.' An' George 'd squirm on his stool an' bite at the shank o' his pipe; at last, up he rises, throws a dark look at Bessie, gives us a surly Good night, an' bangs the door behind him. 'Aw' good night, George!' shouts David after him, 'an' don't forget your stilts, me son,

next time ye come courtin' ' — at which Bredin laughs, an' the wife, an' Bessie herself; but for me, I shut me lips, for never did I like that David, an' 't was a wonder to me what was possessin' Bessie that night.

"But the next day 't was much the same, an' the next; an' by the followin' Sunday 't was round the country that David was the boy for Bessie Bredin, as sure as gun was iron. An' faith, it seemed so; for if ye met David on the road he had his head as high as Napoleon, an' if ye met George he looked like a plucked goose; an' if ye saw one pass the other, 't was a black sneer David had on his face, an' George 'd look same as if he was walkin' to the gallows. Bitter enemies they were now — bitter enemies for all that George said little, an' David gave out he did n't care a tinker's curse, an' niver did, for all the Georges in Ireland — not if he was George the Fifth himself.

"Well, things went on like that for a while; an' at last, one fair day in Bunn, our two boys were brought together by some friends, meself among them, an' over a quiet glass in the Diamond Hotel we strove to make them forget an' forgive. Let the girl choose for herself,

said we, an' let the best man win. But sorrow a bit would they shake hands — no, Sir. David stood there in his high an' mightiness, an' George hung back glowerin' ; an' at last, over a hot word that fell, George struck David. *Whew-w!* 't was a fair shaloo in two seconds; ye 'd think the house was comin' down ; but we all got between them, an' at last got them quiet on the understandin' that they were to fight it out fair an' square on Cluny Island the followin' Saturday evenin'. 'All right!' shouts David, an' whacks the table, 'all right, me sons — an' bring your coffin,' he says to George as our party left the room ; 'bring your coffin!'

"Well, Sir, Saturday evenin' came, an' over we all went to Cluny Island, George an' his party in one cot, an' David and his in another. All roarin' David was wi' joy, an' I 'm thinkin' that maybe there was a drop o' drink somewhere near him ; but George was quiet enough an' never said a word all the way over, an' up through the woods till we came to the ould cock-pit on top o' the hill. An' there me two heroes strip an' face each other.

"'T was a good fight, Sir, as good as ever happened in these parts; an' a pluckier battle

than George fought I never seen. No! nor never will. He was a light man in those days, an' not over tall, an' David was like the side o' a house, sturdy an' strong as an ox; but George faced his man as if he was only five fut nothin'. An', by jing! if we did n't think at first he was goin' to win, that nimble he was an' quick, that watchful an' 'cute, an' hard in the blow, too, sometimes. Yes, he hammered David for long enough. But never tell me, Sir, that your race-horse 'll beat your fourteen-stone hunter over a ten-miles' course. Aw! not at all. Ye may practise your nimbleness on a stone wall as long as ye like, but is n't it the wall has the laugh in the end? Ah! of course. An' so it was wi' George. After a while he gets a bit tired; then loose in his guard; then hard in his breath — then, Sir, David lets fly right an' left like a flail on a barn floor an' in ten minutes, Sir, he had George standin' before him as limp as a rag an' as broken a man as ye ever seen. 'Are ye done?' shouts David at that. 'Are ye ready for your coffin?' 'No!' answers George, an' tries to rally; 'not till ye kill me!' 'Then here goes, an' be danged to ye!' roars David; wi' that

rushes in like a tornado, hits out, an' down goes George like an empty sack.

"'Now,' says David again, foldin' his arms an' throwin' back his shoulders, 'now, coffin or no coffin, you 're done, me divil! Eh?' says he, turnin' to his party wi' a laugh. 'Eh, boys? there 's hope for Ireland yet!' Back comes the skirl; an' just as we were goin' to give them defiance I hears a swish o' skirts, an' there, stoopin' over George, is Bessie Bredin.

"As pale as death she was; an' at sight of her, David, like the rest of us, stands back. Down she goes on her knees, lifts George's head, tells one o' us to get water; then bathes his face an' neck wi' it, an' like that stays till he comes to an' is able to stand up. Then she helps him into his coat an' waistcoat, puts his cap on, an' turns to where David was standin' back glowerin' from under his eyebrows.

"'Ah,' says she, 'ye big, cowardly bully! Ye dare n't fight your match. No! Ye 'd rather lay your dirty hands where ye know they 'd hurt. It 's a wonder 't was n't myself ye challenged. D' ye know what he did, boys?' says she, turnin' to us all. 'He creeps up the lane to see me last night, an' comes rubbin' his

big hands into the kitchen, an' he whispers in my ear: "If ye want to see me fit a corpse to a coffin," he says, "be in Cluny Island the morrow evenin' about dusk." Yes, that 's what ye said, an' ye made sure I 'd be here too late — ye big, black, cowardly liar, ye! Go home,' she says, pointin' at him wi' her finger, an' speakin' as one would to a tinker. 'Go home an' marry a beggarwoman!' says she; 'maybe she 'll teach ye manners an' soften the heart in ye.'

"Then she turned to George.

"'Come away, George,' says she, an' takes his arm; 'come away, me son; an' God forgive me for bringin' ye to this!'"

They Twain.

They Twain.

I

At the top of the table, facing the parlour window, and with his head (as he leant back in his chair) right beneath the weights of a clattering Dutch clock, sat Hugh Fallon, a well-aged, solemn-faced man; on his right, wedged between the best china cupboard and a corner of the table, sat Maria, his wife; on his left, Hannah, his second daughter. These made the Fallon party.

Facing Hugh, his feet tapping impatiently on the clay floor, his chair tilted back and threatening every moment to work havoc among the geraniums in the window-recess behind, was Martin Hynes, well-dressed, handsome, a man of about thirty years. He was the other party; and between the two, before the fire and below a resplendent portrait of William III. (hanging

precariously, so it seemed, over the china ornaments on the mantel-piece), was that man of words and wit, Fallon's brother-in-law, Big Ned Nolan. Him we may call the intermediary.

"Well," suddenly cried Hynes; "what are we waitin' for? Why can't we start at once?"

"True," answered Fallon; "we may as well get the thing over, there 's nothin' to hinder us I suppose?"

"*Aisy*," said Big Ned, and spread his hands. "Aisy now. Mebbe it 's *on*reg'lar, an' mebbe 't is n't; but on me left here sits *him*self; may I ax where then 's *her*self?"

Himself (so called) twisted impatiently in his chair; the father of herself turned and looked inquiringly at his wife; it was herself's sister who spoke.

"Ye won't see her this night," said Hannah; "horses would n't drag her here. I did me best to bring her an' 't was no use."

"No matter," answered Ned, "no matter; I only axed — *Aisy now*, Martin, me son, one minit now. It just struck me, seein' by chance the text on the wall over there, that mebbe somewan," and Ned threw a sly look at Hugh sitting dour and solemn at the head of the table, "some-

wan 'd lek to start proceedin's wi' a mouthful o' prayer." Mrs. Fallon turned her eyes and fixed them on the big Bible lying solitary in the middle of the table; Hugh himsel sat grave and irresolute. Was the occasion fitting? thought he. Yes and no. It was well always to ask a blessing on man's feeble deliberations; still —

"Here," cried Hynes, all abruptly, "no more o' this foolery — we want no prayin' to settle what 's to be done here. Hugh Fallon, ye know me and the kind o' me; your father knew mine. I 'm a good Protestan' and a man o' me word, an' I 've lived your neighbour all me life. Well, I 've courted your daughter Jane off an' on these years — an' she says she 'll marry me. But all that 's neither here nor there. Ye know what I 've got for her; there 's a tidy farm an' a good house an' offices — ye know it all; if your daughter marries me, she 'll not be the worst off in these parts by a long way. She can act the lady if she likes, an' for food or raiment she 'll need nothin'. All this ye know, Hugh Fallon, as well as I do. Come! have I said enough?"

"Plenty," answered Fallon, "plenty — so far as it goes. But there 's one thing I 'd like to

have your word on. What 's this I hear about the money ye owe Bob Hicks over there on mortgage?" Big Ned brought his fist down heavily. "Right," said he, "right." Mrs. Fallon tightened her lips; Hannah coughed nervously.

"Who told ye that, Fallon?" cried Hynes, springing to his feet. "Tell me the blaggard's name." ("*Aisy, aisy*," said the peacemaker.)

"If I did, I 'd have to name a whole townland."

"Ye know it 's a lie, a damned lie." ("*Aisy, aisy*.")

"Well, that's as may be. It's one word against another. If ye say it 's a lie, well, I believe ye."

"Just as ye like, Fallon; say ye believe me, an' I say no more. Say ye believe the lie (Hynes half turned to the door) an' out I go."

The Fallons stepped back. Debt or no debt, they had no desire to close the door on Hynes. He was a man of standing in Gorteen, of good family and appearance; he made, with all his faults of temper, extravagance, and the rest, a better match for Jane than they had ever hoped for. So having shown him that, if on his side there were hopes, on their side there were doubts,

the Fallons stepped back, asked pardon, and presently were forgiven.

And now came the other side of the transaction.

"What," asked Hynes, "was the sum total of the fortune which Jane Fallon would bring with her?"

A hush fell in the little parlour. Big Ned drove his hands into his pockets, and fixed his eyes on the family Bible; Mrs. Fallon and Hannah exchanged knowing looks; Hugh looked thoughtfully for a moment at the portrait of King William, then coughed, and leant back in his chair.

The opening of Hugh's speech was clever, but rather tiresome. He was conscious of Martin's virtues; he would be glad to welcome him as one of the family; he hoped that everything might be amicably settled, and have the blessing of the Almighty. Still, he was anxious to remove misapprehension. It passed current in Gorteen that he, Hugh Fallon, was a man of means, and that his daughters would bring with them large fortunes. Now —

"I say, Fallon," interrupted Hynes, with that tone and manner of supercilious arrogance

which, perhaps, experience had taught him to assume in transacting matters of business, "enough of this. I know what you 're drivin' at. If ye can't belittle me, you 'll belittle yourself. Suppose ye cut the speech short, an' make your excuses after you 've told me what you 'll give with the girl."

"Young man, young man!" cried Big Ned; "that 's a foolish way to talk. You 'll gain nothin' by goin' to work that way. Go on wi' your speech, Hugh; it 's great."

Fallon had flushed crimson; his jaw was set; and when presently he fixed his eyes on Hynes and began to speak again his voice rang hard. He would take the young man at his word; he would say at once what his daughter Jane would take with her — *Item*, her gray pony; *Item*, her brindled cow and calf; *Item*, sundry hens and chickens which she had reared; *Item*, a wooden bedstead and fittings —

"Take all that afterwards," said Hynes. "What 's the money?"

"Fifty poun' in notes," shouted Fallon.

No wonder Mrs. Fallon and Hannah exchanged wondering looks; no wonder Big Ned smote the table. Fifty pounds! Why, rumour

and their own knowledge had set the dowry at not less than three times that sum. Fifty pounds! No wonder Hynes threw back his head and laughed. *Fifty pounds and Jane Fallon* — Oh, Lord, Lord!

"Fifty pound," cried he; "is that what ye say? D'ye hear your husband, ma'am? He says he'll disgrace ye all before the country. D'ye hear him, Ned Nolan?"

"I hear," said Nolan. "Ye've brought it on yerself, young man; ye may fight it out between ye;" and with that answer Mrs. Fallon and Hannah, well knowing that Hugh had spoken in anger, and in the end would not disgrace them, agreed.

So Fallon and Hynes fought it out, pound by pound; the younger man attacking strongly and with more discretion than he had hitherto used (as, indeed, became one who was fighting, not so much for a wife as for money wherewith to pay his debts — yes, his debts); the other retiring stubbornly and not without a grim satisfaction at the sight of his opponent paying so heavily for his folly — at last stopped dead at one hundred pounds. That was still far short of Jane's dowry. No matter; he had been

crossed and angered. One step further he would not go.

And now ensued a battle royal; a long, hot, nearly foul struggle, in which the combatants wrangled as do jobbers in a fair over the price of a horse; in which Hynes argued, persuaded, threatened, and Hugh Fallon stood doggedly firm, nor scorned the voluble services of his supports; whilst ever between the two parties Big Ned strove mightily for peace and terms. So for an hour the battle waged, then flagged somewhat; presently, under Ned's astute generalship, came near an issue.

"Come, boys," cried Ned, "enough talk! Listen to me, me sons. Hynes here says he'll take a hunderd an' twenty — no less; Fallon says he'll give a hunderd — no more. Come! gie me yer hands, split the differ, *an' say a hunderd an' ten.* Is it a bargain? Now then! no drawin' back; clinch the bargain quick an' be done, for God knows me throat's pantin' for a drop o' sperits."

"It's a hunderd," said Hugh.

"Well, curse ye," cried Hynes, "for a heart o' stone! Come! here's the last word; make it guineas, an' I take the heifer."

The offer (which was precisely such an one as Ulster men make every day in fairs) seemed reasonable. His wife and daughter urged Fallon to accept it; Big Ned lent his voice on the same side.

"Very well," said Fallon, at last, "very well; guineas be it, an' I wish you luck o' it."

"Amen an' Hurroo!" shouted Ned; "an' now out wi' the glasses, Maria, ye girl ye, till we christen the match; out wi' the glasses — Whisht! who 's this? Be Jabers! it 's Jane. Come in, Jane, come in; we 've settled ye, ye girl, ye."

Jane, very pale and very calm (so it seemed), walked slowly up to the table; and as Hynes eyed her, his thought was that even with a hundred guineas glimmering behind her, she looked deuced old and ugly.

"Come!" shouted Ned; "come, Martin, an' kiss yir sweetheart. Damn it! man, if I was your age — "

"I 'll ask ye to stay where ye are," said Jane to Martin; then, "I 'm thankful to ye all for the good opinion ye have of me; an' I thank ye all for the way ye have bought an' sold me this night — it 's the custom I know; still, I thank ye."

"Don't be a fool, Jane," said her mother.

"I know I am," answered she; "maybe 't was Satan tempted me to listen to all ye 've said about me — but I was curious. Again, I thank ye."

"Och, not at all," said Big Ned; "sure, we 'd do as much for any decent girl."

"For all that, I 'm worth more 'n a hundred guineas — an' if you, father an' mother, choose to sell me for that, I don't choose to go. Money 's not my price — an' you, Martin Hynes, should know it. Your *heifer!* — that was the word."

"Come, come, Jane," said Hynes, "stop this foolishness — the word meant nothing — forgive it."

"Thank God I know ye in time — I 'll never marry ye."

Then Hugh Fallon rose and took Jane by the arm and sat her in a chair.

"Sit ye there," said he, "an' drink your own health, an' hold your tongue; for you 'll marry whoever I tell ye to marry."

And Jane, her lips moving in prayer for strength, sat down.

II.

Next morning came Hynes, all radiant and hearty, all his indiscretions forgotten, his faults hidden conveniently away; his voice now soft and pleasant, his face shining with good fellowship; Hynes, the lover, in a word; no more the man of the night before than Jane was a woman who had once loved him.

"Where 's Jane? Where 's Jane?" he called from the threshold; presently found her hard at work in the kitchen, seized her and tried for a kiss. Quickly she freed herself and faced him.

"Ah," said she bitterly, "you 'd kiss me as Judas kissed the Master! Ye may go; you and your kisses are not for me. D' ye think I forget? D' ye know me so little as to think one night would change me?" Martin's eyes fell.

"Ah," said he, "is it for a word you 'd give me the go-by? Sure it was only a slip; I meant nothing —"

"No," said Jane, "maybe you did n't; but the word can stand all the same. If I 'm not what ye said, ye bargained for me like one.

Money, money! — that 's what ye want to marry, Martin Hynes; not me at all, but my money. 'Give me so much,' ye said — Oh! I heard ye — 'Give me so much, an' I 'll take the heifer!' *Take* me — !"

"Ah!" said Hynes; "quit your foolishness. Is n't there a bargain in Gorteen before every marriage? An' supposin' I *was* hard. Was n't I obliged to be when I faced your father, an' Hannah, an' your mother?"

"I know! I don't forget it! It 's all o' ye. Oh, the disappointment! An' ye lied last night, Martin; hard ye lied. Ah! I could tell it by your voice. Ye *are* in debt, I say. It 's not me ye want; it 's the money, to cover your disgrace. Oh, I know it! Oh, the disappointment! And I thought ye wanted me for myself. It 's all over — all over!" and fast came the tears.

Now was Martin's chance. For a woman in tears is at your knowing man's feet.

"Och! there, Jane," said he, and came closer. "Och! there, woman dear. God knows, I do care for ye. Sure, ye know I do. Come, old girl!"

He laid his hand on her arm, and for a

moment Jane wavered — Ah! he was such a handsome man; such a bright, handsome man, and his voice was so soft as he stood there pleading — for a moment she wavered, then suddenly found strength and drew from him.

"No, no!" she cried; "don't touch me. Never, never! Go away! Martin, ye tempt me, ye tempt me! Never, never! will I marry ye!"

"Ah, don't say that," pleaded Hynes; "don't, woman, don't. Sure, ye 'll break me heart."

Jane dried her tears.

"Martin Hynes," said she, "this is my last word. Ye may go an' get a wife to be your slave somewhere else — for in this house, God helping me, you won't get one. I did care for ye till last night. Now I don't care a thraneen for ye; the face o' ye is hateful to me, an' the soft words o' ye. I know ye now — oh! I know ye now. It 's your slave, I 'd be; cat an' dog we 'd live all our days. Ah! it 's well I know — well I know!" And she hid her face in her hands.

Martin stood and looked hard at her. Was she in sober earnest, or only playing with him,

trying him? Was all his hard bargaining to go for nothing, and the money with it, and — and, Jane, too? Not that he cared a deal for Jane! No. A little pale-faced thing like that, with her plain smooth hair and sober dress, and slow, dreamy eyes — how could he care very much? Still, a good wife she would make for any man, and she had the money. He shook her.

"Come, Jane," said he. "Come! woman dear." No answer.

"Och! Jane. Och! woman dear, won't ye forgive me?" Still no answer.

"And ye won't marry me, Jane — your own me — eh, Jane?" He walked to the door. "Very well, then, so be it. Your mind 's your own — who 'd try to force it? But don't be a fool, Jane, I 'd advise ye; don't try me too far."

The door closed; Jane ran to the window and watched Hynes cross the yard; then put her head down on the table. "Oh, God help me," she sobbed; "God help me."

Not dolefully, or in any bad humour (for he had no thought that Jane would resist him long; nor, indeed, cared exceedingly if she did.

Was she the only girl in Gorteen who had gold jingling in her pocket?) — not dolefully, therefore, Hynes went swinging across the fields and soon came to the potato-plot where Fallon was working.

"It's a good day," said he, and pulled out his pipe. "I've been above. Jane's in the tantrums. I couldn't make head or tail of her. I left her roarin' yonder an' shoutin' that she hates the face o' me. What in glory's come over her?" Fallon leant a moment on his shovel.

"Foolishness," answered he, "that's what ails her — some sentimental whim or other about love, an' all that. It's nothin'. Women are lek that — it'll all go. When you're as ould as I am you'll know it."

"She says she'll not marry me — swears she'll not." Fallon laughed.

"Ah! that's another way they've got — they lek to be forced, an' made much of. Ay! they're all alike. Ye needn't fear; she'll marry ye."

"Suppose she won't?"

"Suppose! What supposin'? Amn't I her father? Didn't I breed an' rear her? Amn't

I marryin' her? D' ye think childer o' mine are brought up to rebel against their parents?" . . . . and so on, wearily.

"Ay," answered Hynes. "True. Still, Jane's powerful determined, an' she might hold out."

"Determined! An' what am *I?*" cried Fallon. "Hold out? Well, no. She'll not; niver fear. She's just playin' wi' ye. Just you come an' see her as if nothin' had happened; *I'll* talk to her. Away, now, an' get your weddin' garment ready; five weeks come the morra you'll want it."

"Very good. I'm willin' an' ready. It's in your own hands," said Hynes. "Good day to ye."

"Ay, it's in my hands," thought Fallon, as he stood looking after his would-be son-in-law; "an' serve ye right, my play-boy, if Jane does n't take ye. Still—" He drove his shovel into the ground, and for the rest of the day sweetened toil by fitting to his tongue certain texts and apt phrases bearing on the rights of parents and the duties of children; then, night having come, went home, led Jane into the parlour, and there, from his place beneath the clattering clock, glibly delivered himself. He had heard

that Jane was inclined to be wayward, and stiff-necked, and rebellious; was that so? Indeed! And Jane was still inclined that way? Oh, just so. Well — and thereupon came the parental lecture; long, rambling, authoritative, brutally frank. He would stand no nonsense. He was master in that house. So long as she lived under his roof, Jane should do his bidding. And for herself, in conclusion, let her beware of the sin involved in the breach of that commandment delivered to Moses on the Mount, "*Honour thy father* . . . ." and let her take to heart that other command, "*Children obey your parents* IN ALL THINGS!"

"Father," replied Jane, "always have I obeyed ye an' honoured ye, as ye know, for the good ye have in your heart; now I want to honour ye — but how can I when you command me to do what is wrong? You 've quoted texts for me; don't ye mind that other passage: '*And they twain shall be one flesh* . . . .' D'ye think *we* could be one flesh?"

"Enough of this!" cried her father, and rose wrathfully. "Are ye goin' to obey me?"

"Father, don't ask me to set myself against ye. Always to this day have we agreed to-

gether. Surely ye can see. I *want* to honour an' obey ye — why can't ye let me?"

"Go your ways," roared Fallon; "go your ways an' purify your rebellious heart. Don't talk to me! Five weeks hence you marry Martin Hynes, or you're no daughter o' mine. Go your ways!"

That was plain speaking; what could Jane, a poor weak woman striving to do right, without friend or place of refuge, with her hopes shattered and her soul weary, what could Jane dare answer to it? In sooth, nothing. Words were so vain, argument so useless; everything was against her; alone she stood face to face with her fate; what should she do? Speak and go out into the world? Ah! no — no; her friends (except in this trial) were still her friends, not unworthy, any of them; her home was still her home. Submit and go under the yoke; No — no! In God's name! what then? Keep silent and endure, and hope that all might come right in the end? Yes, perhaps so.

Ah, poor Jane!

So Jane endured in silence, and her life was hard. Often Hynes came, and always she received him coldly, silently, not dare trust her-

self to look at his face. Day after day she endured her mother's hard looks, and shakes of the head, and bitter murmurings about the fate of those doomed to breed fools and rear them ingrates. Day after day Hannah, her sister (of whom, had you known her, you might have expected better things), upbraided her for her joylessness, her foolish attempts to thwart their father, and to make them all the laughing-stock of the country; above all for her treatment of Hynes; day after day Jane heard all this and endured it; endured, moreover, her father's stern high-handedness — and still kept silent.

The days passed. Preparations for the wedding went swiftly on. The banns were called; presents and congratulations came; guests were bidden to the feast; Hannah's tongue wearied; Hynes (like many others) taking Jane's silence for consent, grew jubilant: and Jane herself? "Oh, what about Jane?" said her friends; and their word just here may stand. A fool she was, with her head full of nonsense, going about the house with a face like a corpse, an' mumblin' an' mutterin' to herself. Oh, ay! A fool she was — a fool! What better match than Hynes could any girl wish for? He had faults — ay, so had

every man. "Serve Jane right if she missed him — the fool!"

Poor Jane! She was fallen on evil tongues and evil days. And yet she was only a poor, weak woman, striving feebly to do right. Only a poor weak woman. Ah! she knew herself to be pitiably weak. Might strength, great strength be given to her . . . . Ah! how happy she had once been. Ah! the bitter, bitter change a few dark hours had brought.

So the days passed, and at last came the wedding-day. The carriage (the day before it had gone dolefully through Bunn town as a funeral coach) was at the door. The bridegroom, arrayed gloriously, and radiant as the morning, had come. In the house of the Fallons was joy and laughter.

"Time to start," was the cry. Bring forth the bride . . . . Eh? Eh? What was that? Jane not in her room! Not dressed! Where in glory, then —? Great bustle, great search; hands up everywhere; bewilderment on every face. No wedding? No breakfast? No meat! No *drink!* Oh, absurd! Jane *must* be found!

High and low they searched. No Jane anywhere. Out they all went; searched up and

down, started even, some of them, to peer half-heartedly into ditches and bogholes. No ; Jane was lost.

"She 's drowned herself!" cried Hannah. "I know it. She 's had death in her face this week. Oh, Lord, Lord!" she sobbed, and ran wildly into the fields; there suddenly came on Jane, dressed in her work-a-day garments calmly weeding in her little garden patch.

"What 's this; what 's this?" cried Hannah. "What new foolishness is this? Come in! Come in!"

Jane tightened her lips, and went on weeding. Then Hannah shook her.

"Come in, I tell ye!" cried she; "before half the townland is here to jeer at ye. Come in! it 's too late now to repent. Come!"

Jane shook her head.

"You 're not coming?" cried Hannah.

"No."

"You 'll disgrace us all!" cried Hannah. "Niver again can we lift our heads in Gorteen. Oh, you miserable fool!" shrieked she, and ran to spread the news. But Jane worked on, her lips moving in prayer for strength, her face very pale and plain below her shining black hair.

What was this? her mother panted. What was this? She would be late — the breakfast would be *spoilt;* all her lovely cooking be *lost.*

Her father came, took her roughly by the arm, and pointed towards the house. "Go in an' dress yourself," said he. "March! Be ready inside fifteen minutes."

"No, father," said Jane.

"Do as I bid ye!"

"No — you 'll kill me first."

"Do ye want me to raise a scene?" shouted Fallon. "D' ye *dare* to defy me? Defy *me!* Quick! in with ye!" With both hands he gripped her and strove to pull her towards the house. "Quick! in with ye!" he shouted.

"No, father — with God's help, no."

The guests came hurrying up, among them the bridegroom. Hynes stepped forward and took Fallon by the arm.

"Stand back," said he, "stand back, Fallon; let go her arms, I tell ye. Jane," he went on, and took her hands, "look me in the face and answer the truth. Here before all of us say that ye won't marry me. Say it, Jane."

So Jane lifted her eyes, a great sob in her

throat, and her lips prayerless; lifted her eyes and looked at Hynes, and at sight of him, his manhood, his glory and beauty, she suddenly lost strength, and she went in and married him.

Shan's Diversion.

Shan's Diversion.

MARKET-DAY and its glories were over; all about the Grogan's home was snug for the night; Shan and Biddy sat on stools by the hearth-stone, silently enjoying their supper of a toasted herring and white bread and tea.

Suddenly Shan slapped his knee, set his bowl on the floor, and, after a deal of fumbling, brought forth a letter from the inner pocket of his waistcoat.

"Niver crossed me mind t' this mortial minute," he began apologetically; "if it had n't come into me head about meetin' Phil, the lad in the post-office, I 'd niver — "

"Who 's it from?" snapped Biddy.

Shan looked sideways at the envelope. Well, that was hard to say just yet, he thought; but the lassie in the office told him it came from America, so he supposed —

"Whisht, ye fool!" cried his wife. "It's from yir brother Mike. Open it quick."

Shan took out his clasp-knife, cautiously slit the envelope, and pulled out half a sheet of note-paper carefully folded over a money order.

"Give uz it," said Biddy, as she shot out her crooked fingers. "No — th' other — the money. How much is it?"

"How can I tell till I read it? Aisy, till I see what th' ould boy says."

Shan shifted his stool till he had brought his back against the chimney-jamb; then leant towards the fire to catch its light. The letter was short and quite matter of fact: the writer was well, requested an answer, enclosed a trifle to help with the rent.

"That's the whole av it, ivery scrape," said Shan. "Well, thank God, the ould boy's in health — "

"Give uz it," said Biddy, sharply; "an' read this. Tell uz quick."

Shan took the order, leant again towards the firelight, and from the very first word began to spell out its contents. Presently he came to the kernel of the matter: "'the sum of — T-W-O *pounds*.'"

Like a flash came the temptation, — a temptation which at any time might have come to Shan, as to any honest man, but which just then, thanks to the malignant potency of market-day whisky, he was hardly prepared to resist.

"'T-w-o, T-W-O —'" he stammered. There were ten shillings more: suppose he did not read them? Biddy would be none the wiser, and he could . . . .

"Ach! what ails ye, stammerin' an' stutterin' lek that?" said Biddy, querulously.

"Och! it's the light," said Shan, and shifted his stool; "shure it's ojus bad."

"Only *two pound*," said Biddy. "Give it over — I've heard enough."

Shan reached the money order to his wife: Fate had willed it; *two pounds* he had read, the rest, only for Biddy, he *might* have read: *two pounds* then it must remain.

He put his head back against the jamb, closed his eyes, and began to think. His mind was a little confused, his moral sense a little dulled (as indeed sometimes happens with the natives of Bilboa on market-days); still certain broad facts stood clear against the feeble flow of his thought.

He had lied — yes; but maybe he 'd have told the truth had she let him read on. The lie might pass. . . . The two pounds were Biddy's; yes, every farthing of them. Ay! but the ten shillings were his — if he could get them. Could he? . . . *Ten shillings!* Since he married, never once had he had so much to call his own — not once. Whatever he sold, — pigs, calves, potatoes, all the money went to Biddy — Biddy — Biddy! Was that how a *man* should be treated? Well, please God, some day he 'd make a change; *he* 'd show his teeth. He did n't care a curse about money — still, he was treated hard. . . . And now! yes, be damned to him! but he 'd have that ten shillings if he had to go on his knees to Bunn for it.

His face flushed with a spurious courage; he looked cautiously across at Biddy. With her elbows set on her knees, she sat forward, thinking hard, and sometimes mumbling as she looked over the top of the money order into the fire.

Upstairs, in a safe place between the thatch and the side-wall, was hidden the pound or two which hitherto had made the whole fortune of the Grogans. This God-send, so Biddy was thinking, added to that hoard, more than doubled it, —

a powerful lot of money to be under the roof with two lone people! . . . Ah! it was all needed sore. A new pair of corduroys for Shan; a striped shawl for herself; a — a — naw! the bonnet must go. They wanted a skillet, a gallon, and a milking porringer. . . . Could she get that bonnet? Och, och! her wits were wandering. . . . And the rent? Aw! the rent might go to glory. She 'd pay when she was made, not a foot sooner. And — and who knew what might turn up? Maybe another order!

She looked at the piece of white paper between her hands. To think *that* meant TWO POUNDS. Two whole pounds! It looked shocking thin and delicate. Suppose she lost it, tore it? Suppose the post-office smashed and could n't pay? *Aw, aw!*

Almost fiercely she turned to Shan.

"We 'll start for Bunn first thing in the mornin'," said she. "D' ye hear me?"

Shan turned on his stool and began rubbing his ear. Sure the divil was in the woman — and he thinking she 'd send him alone! If she came she 'd see him sign for and draw *all* the money — an' — an' —

"D 'ye heare me?" repeated Biddy.

"All right," said Shan. "All right. Jist as ye lek."

It was not all right, though, and the knowledge kept Shan that night awake for hours. Where was his Dutch courage now? Gone with the snuffing of the candle. It was as certain that Biddy would go to Bunn and find him out as that she was lying even then in the bed beside him. Oh! he wished the ten shillings in the pit of hell! . . . Confess? Naw — naw — he dare not! Better trust to luck — maybe something would turn up.

Nothing turned up in the night; nothing the next morning; nothing all that weary way to Bunn. Shan's heart was heavy as his unwilling feet. Never had the streets given him a colder welcome. And there was the post-office; and nothing had turned up. Well! so be it.

What was that? *He must sign his name?* Indeed; and where? *There?*

Aw, very well. Give him grip of a pen. Something flashed upon him . . . . Yes! he 'd try. He squared his elbows, cocked his head, dabbed the pen down viciously — and broke it. Ach! such pens. Was that the best her Majesty's Government could do? He tried

another — it broke. Well, sorrow take the like he ever came across! *Could n't write?* of course he could. *What! they had no more?* He drew a penny from his pocket, threw it on the counter, and implored Biddy to do a charity and go next door for a ha'porth o' nibs. Biddy hesitated; could see no harm in going; went, and presently returning met Shan in the post-office doorway with two sovereigns in his outstretched palm.

"Ha!" said he, "shure I shamed them. Ye wur hardly out o' the dure when they rowled out the finest pens ye iver seen — ay, by the dozen. An' there 's yir money safe as the Bank."

So far very well. But soon for Shan arose this question: What should he do with the half sovereign, which just then lay wrapped in paper at the root of a great thistle in the corner of a field? He could not bank it; his fear of Biddy forbade that he should carry it, or spend it, or hide it in the house. It was worth less than nothing lying there fallow; some morning, stealthy as his visits were, Biddy would surely discover him gloating over his treasure; he might die and leave it to the worms and the jingle

of a stranger's spade. Yes, thought Shan, as he stood, one fine May morning, leaning on his shovel in a potato farrow; yes, something must be done with it. It haunted his sleep, puckered his brow, was a load on his mind, was the divil's own bother entirely.

From far away, across the hills, came a shrill whistle, and, quick after it, the rumble of the first morning train on its way from Clogheen to Bunn. For the hundredth time Shan wished that he could have just one jaunt by steam right out into the wonders of the world. What! . . . Yes, by thunder! There was the money waiting, lying waiting at the thistle root. He had n't had a day's diversion since his wedding-day — twenty long years ago. . . . Biddy? *Pah!* He would be a man for once; he 'd go. Yes, but perhaps, after all, it were best to go peacefully and knowingly.

All day long he pondered. Five o'clock came and Biddy's *Hoi-i-i* from the hill. He drove the point of his shovel under a root, bore hard on the handle, smashed the metal across, and with the broken pieces in his hand went sadly up to tea.

Dear, oh dear! *such* a misfortune — broke it

at the last shovelful. And there was the field only half done, and he had n't another. *Borrow one?* Of course not, and everybody busy like himself. *A spade!* Did Biddy say a spade might do? Aw, 'deed it might, and so might a wooden spoon if the nights were all days! *Get a new one?* Ay! he supposed so; there was no other way out of it; that was the way the money went; och, och, all that long tramp into Bunn! *Go then?* Go that night?

"Is it walk to Bunn an' back *now* ye'd have me do?" Shan asked with a world of reproach in his voice. "*Now*, after all that day's work? Be the King! but it's worse than nigger drivin'."

Well, then, could he be back early in the morning?

"Mebbe," said Shan, "mebbe; if the shops is open mebbe I cud." He stretched himself lazily; put on his hat; went out, and turning into the byre there covered his mouth with his hand and silently laughed.

Early next morning, Shan, with the price of a new shovel in his pocket, left home and started for Bunn. He kept to the road for about half a mile; then doubled back through the fields

and rescued his half sovereign from the thistle root.

Once on the road again his spirits rose with a bound. From the mountains the air came fresh as dew; the hedges were alive with birds singing among the young green.

"'*She dressed me up in scarlet-red!*'

trotted Shan in his glee,

"'*An' treated me very kind-ly,*
But still I thought me heart 'd break
For the girl I left be-hind me.'"

The girl he left behind him? Biddy!—Biddy befooled and beguiled at home! *Ho, Ho!* He put his hands on his knees and laughed down at the road.

Only a shop here and there in Bunn was open. The air was heavy with fresh peat-smoke. Slatternly women came to the doors and blinked at Shan; their husbands, lounging and smoking against the walls, gave him good-day. He answered shortly and quickened his pace. His mind was quite fixed that, whatever befell, Bunn town should see nothing of his diversion. So, keeping his face firmly from the public houses, he walked steadily up the

middle of the street, and with the gold tight in his hand made straight for the railway station. He would take the train to Clogheen and there divert himself. He would have a good dinner, two bottles of stout — not a drop more, not one; buy a red pocket-handkerchief for himself and a new night-cap for Biddy; take the one o'clock train back, buy his shovel, go straight home and take meekly whatever might come. Heavens above! what a day he would have! The grandest for twenty long years: a whole day to himself — plenty of money — a good dinner — By the King!

He was passing the fair green and in sight of the station. A whistle sounded; he began to run; *whoof, whoof,* went the engine: Shan had missed his train.

He sat down on the ditch and mopped his face. Och, och! the poor luck he had. What could he do? The next train did not start till mid-day — och, och! What could he do? go home and toil all day? He pulled his hat off, and with an oath dashed it on the road. The morning freshness had sped; not a bird sang in the hedges; the sky above laughed savagely down. Go back home! Leave diversion behind and

drudge through a whole weary day! One minute late, only one. Ah! might the divil swamp the train.

He rose, picked up his hat, and feeling almost inclined to beat his disappointed head against the wall, made for the town. . . . One minute late — one — one. . . . The bottles in the window of the hotel parlour caught his eye and gleamed comfort upon him; he stopped, hesitated, went to the door, turned back, turned again and went with a rush through the doorway.

An hour went and left Shan lighter in pocket and head; the second saw him waxed fervid, shouting patriotism, wisdom, treason across the table at his friend the town butcher. Another friend or two joined them. Ah! he was the boy knew a trifle; he was the boy knew how to treat a friend; name their drink, name their drink!

By this, only for fate, Shan's diversion in Clogheen would have been in full swing. Biddy at home was expecting him. Ah! divil cared; more whisky there! Another hour passed. Shan's head was reeling; his mood verging on the quarrelsome. The butcher gave him the

lie; got it back; answered brutally. Shan rose to fight, and the next moment was out in the street storming at the door.

A crowd flew together. Shan opened his arms and appealed for justice. He had been robbed, insulted. "Aw yis," thought Bunn town, "aw yis, an' so do lots more get insulted when they take drink on an empty stomach. An' Shan Grogan of all men, too! an easy-goin' harmless, — whisht! The police! . . . Run, Shan, run! . . . Run, Shan; we're for ye, me boy!"

Shan stood firm. The police were the men he wanted. He had been insulted, robbed. "*Go home*," they said; did they say "*Go home*"? What! they refused to hear him? They refused to see justice done? Ah! the blood-thirsty renegades, the black-hearted cut-throats! . . . Let them dare touch him! *Whew-w-w;* he defied them! . . .

Bunn town cheered Shan as the police closed. He hit out right and left; then broke through the warring crowd and made down hill towards the river.

"Run, Shan; run, ye boy, ye," cried Bunn; and backed its voice by repeated efforts to

stop the career of the law. No use! Re-enforcements hurried out; the handcuffs were as good as on Shan's wrists. He reached the bridge panting and weary. Suddenly he reeled and fell heavily against the parapet. Behind him were the police, angry and remorseless; before him stood a woman with her hands raised and her face big with horror and surprise.

The police ran on; Bunn town stopped dead.

"*Aw, aw,*" went up the voices. "*Aw, aw! Be the Lord, but it's Biddy!*"

Well, when a man hits the police he pays for his sport; and Shan Grogan may thank his luck, and the tearful pleading of his wife, and the eager testimony of his friends and neighbours, that the price he paid for the one diversion of his married life was no more than a night in the cells, and all but a shilling or two of the little hoard which many months of striving (and the kindness of a brother) had gathered between the side-wall and the thatch of his little cottage in Bilboa.

Th' Ould Boy.

Th' Ould Boy.

BELOW in the kitchen the plebeians were making merry with quip and crank, pipe and glass, as they sat round the walls and here and there over the floor in the warmth of the great peat fire; their laughter and chatter (subdued though it was, or tried to be) was heard distinctly above in the little parlour, where round a well-spread table sat a select company, — the *élite* of the wake, you might say, — gravely stirring their tea, eating their ham, discoursing on the merits and virtues (now, many of them, first brought to light) of the man who ofttimes had made merry at that very table and now lay stark and lonely in a room beyond the kitchen.

"Ay, ay," sobbed the widow from her place behind the teacups, "it 's God's truth — he was the generous heart an' the tender — och! the heart av a child!" The spoons clinked

dolefully round the cups; the men solemnly wagged their heads; the women sniffed, and, to conquer emotion, tried buttered toast.

"How often in this very room," the widow went on, "did I hear him spake the word — ay, ay! An' 't was the great gift o' prayer he had. Ah, ye all know it!"

"Ay, ay," went the voices; "we do, we do; 't was powerful, powerful!"

"An' now he 's tuk from us — tuk, tuk," cried the widow; "gone an' left us to struggle wi' Satan — Ah, dear, dear!"

The men were bent over their plates, the women biting their lips; it was blessed relief when the hard, level voice of Red John went out through the doleful assembly.

"It 's truth ye say, ma'am," said John, "an' may your man be safe in glory ('*Amen, Amen*,' went the voices); but for yourself have no fear of Satan an' all his works. Next time he makes bold to struggle wi' ye, just ax if he knows Red John — that 'll settle him."

With one accord all eyes were raised and turned wonderingly towards the bottom of the table, where, one hand thrust carelessly into his waistcoat pocket, the other idly playing with

his knife, sat Red John — a big man, he was, red-headed, and with a strong, impassive face.

"You 're all wonderin' ?" he went on, raising his eyes. "Well, ye need n't. I say to ye all once more : next time Satan tries strugglin' just mention me — that 'll finish him."

Swiftly vanished sorrow and dole ; the men found their big coarse voices ; the women pocketed their handkerchiefs ; all, even the widow herself, called on John to explain.

"Ye mean to say, ye niver heard ?" asked John. "No ? Well, well — such is life ; an' meself hes told the story a score o' times. No odds ! Here ye are ; an' mind," he added, shaking his finger, "no interruptions, an' no sayin' I 'm a liar when I 'm done . . . Of course, ma'am, of course I 'll wait a minute in welcome ; an' just ax them down there to keep their bull's voices quiet. Ye know," he went on as the widow went out for a moment (carrying tobacco, or a bottle, or something, for the plebeians in the kitchen), "it 'll niver do to let the poor thing fret. Och, no, an' there 's nothing like a story to keep the heart from care . . . . Back again, ma'am ! Well, then, 't was like this :

"One day — ay, years ago — word came to

me that Long Bob was runnin' a brewin' o' poteen. Now, when Long Bob brews I 'm off; for let him use treacle, or malt, or whatever he chooses, there 's no man these parts (an' I 've interviewed a few) can make stuff to grip your tongue like he can. No matter. Soon as I heard word, off I went, for I wanted no dregs; an' after a three-mile pull in the cot at last came to a wee island out in the lake; an' there, in the middle o' the scrub an' stones, was me darlint still firin' away; an' round it a parcel o' — Well, never mind, there was more than *one* there I knew, an' all made me welcome. Ah! 't was great stuff that — with a whiff off it like the middle o' a hay-stack, an' not a bite in a gallon of it. Och, och, ma'am, *is* there anything behind ye there in the press? Sure a toothful 'd send the words flowin' out o' me. . . . That 's right, that 's right. *Harros!* Now, now! only a toothful, I said, ma'am; well, so be it. I 'll do me endeavours. Here 's to ye all.

"Well," John went on, when the company had drank the widow's health and wished her long life, "I pass by all that happened there, just sayin' that we had great times, an' that when about dusk I set out for home I held a

tidy sup besides the two lemonade bottles full in me tail pocket. It was a cowld night, an' ye know it 's lonesome work draggin' a cot about the lake; so I 'll not deny but mebbe I *did* wet my lips once or twice on the way; an' I 'll acknowledge straight that when I landed it took a good swig to take the stiffness out o' my joints. But mark me, ma'am, an' all o' ye, ye must n't run away wi' the notion that I was fuddled; I held my share, but I was as steady on my pins when I stepped out home as I am the night, an' as clear in the head as yourself, ma'am; long life to ye an' your very good health. . . . '*Me smilin' little Cruiskeen laun, laun, laun,*' sang John in chorus with the plebeians in the kitchen, beating time with his tumbler on the table; '*me smilin' lit-tle Cruiskeen* LAUN!'

"'T was about eleven o'clock — more or less I 'll not say, as I 'm strivin' for the truth, when I got home. Mary and the childer were all in bed, an' there was a glimmer in the lamp, an' a pot o' porridge waitin' for me over a snug fire; so down I sits an' makes me supper, then lights the pipe and was goin' over (meanin' to make myself comfortable) to hang me coat on the

back o' the door when badness to me if I did n't catch sight o' the neck o' a bottle stickin' out o' the tail pocket. 'Och, och,' says I, scratchin' my head, 'but it's the sore temptation — och, och! I wonder now *would* a wee sup hurt one.' An' afore I could make up my mind the cork was out o' the bottle, and with some o' the poteen in a mug I was over by the dresser liftin' a sup o' water out of a can that stood on the floor.

"Now you 'll attend to this, ma'am, an' the rest o' ye: for it's here the fun began, an' it's here I 'll be truthfuller than ever. Just as I was stoopin' to get the water, there was a shakin' in the house, an' a blue flash that kind o' dazzled me, an' with that I turns round sharp — when lo an' behold ye! there sittin' by the fire, wi' his legs crossed an' him lookin' straight at me, was as fine a lookin' gentleman as ever I clapped eyes on. All dressed in black he was, wi' a big cloak fallin' to the ground, an' a top hat, if ye please; an' his hair black, an' his face shaved, an' sorrow a smell o' jewellery on his person. 'Arrah, Lord save us,' says I to myself, 'who are ye at all, an' where did ye come from?' An' somehow the way he sat there that

cool an' the *divilish* way he looked at me set me shakin' : if it had n't been for the drop in the mug I 'd ha' dropped on the floor. But that gave me courage, an' wi' that I minded me manners an' speaks out. 'Good evenin', sir,' says I; 'it's pretty late ye 'll be?' He looked straight at me, keepin' his legs crossed, an' not one word he answered. Then, thinkin' maybe he was hard o' hearin', I speaks again. 'Good evenin', sir,' says I; 'is it missed your way ye have th' night?' But sorrow a word; there he sat in the chair, — just as you are yourself, ma'am, beggin' pardon an' meanin' no comparisons, — an' never moved hand or foot or budged a lip. So I scratched my head an' cast about what I was to do; I could n't keep standin' there like a fool an' I was afraid to move. 'What in glory,' thinks I, 'am I to do?' Then all of a sudden the thought struck me; an' round I turns to the coat hangin' on the back o' the door an' takes th' other lemonade bottle out o' the pocket.

"'Axin' your pardon, sir;' says I, 'but if it 's not makin' bold could I offer ye the least taste just to keep the raw from your bones?' Not a word he answered; but, thinks I, there 's a twinkle in

your eye, my boy, that looks as if you 'd be partial to a drop: an' ye all know a nod 's as good as a wink to a blind horse. So, keepin' an eye on him over me shoulder, I turned an' got another mug off the dresser, an' mixin' a tidy dose I went across the floor an' offered it t' him. Like a lamb, sirs, he took it; gulped it down an' smacked his lips on the last drop. But see here, ma'am, may I never see light if the draught did n't turn into blue blazes in his throat. Ye laugh! Well, don't then if it is n't at your own ignorance. Laugh! troth most o' ye 'll see worse than that after ye die;" and John winked over his glass at the company.

"Well, 'thunder an' turf,' says I to meself; 'what kind of a customer is this? Sure if he 'd be sociable even, it 'd not be so bad. Howsomed'er,' says I, 'I 'll make myself at home by my own fire,' an' down I plops on a stool fornenst him, pulls out the cutty, fills it an' lights up. After a couple o' whiffs I wipes the shank on my coat an' offers it to him. 'Mebbe you 'd like a draw?' says I, holdin' the cutty to him across the hearth; 'people these parts say it goes well wi' pateen.' He reached out an' took it, knocked the ashes off it, an' put

it in his mouth. May death have me, ma'am, if the sight did n't parch my tongue! Every whiff o' him was a blue *strame* o' fire, an' ye could see blue fire dancin' over the pipe, an' the eyes o' him glared like a cat's in the dark. An' he never moved a limb; just sat there as unconcerned as ever in his black suit, movin' his lips an' whiffin' out them infernal blue strames. 'Ah, great powers!' says I; 'what are ye at all, at all? Why are ye here? Why are ye here?' An' with that — for I was frightened powerful — I tumbled off the stool, an' with an odious clatter went crash among the pots an' pot hooks. . . . An' the next thing I hears is Mary gettin' out o' bed in the room above an' liftin' the latch to come an' see what was ep.

"She drew back immediately she seen someone wi' me — by good luck the gentleman had his back to her; an' in a minute or two down she comes in her petticoat — savin' your presence, ladies all; an' wi' a shawl round her shoulders.

"'What 's the matter, John?' says she, kind of frightened like, an' standin' behind the boy-o sittin' there like a graven image smokin' away.

"'Nothin',' says I.

"'But I was woke out o' me sleep wi' a shockin' clatter,' says she.

"'Ye were,' says I, 'right enough. I stumbled over the pot there.'

"'You 're late,' says she.

"'I am,' says I.

"'What kept ye?' says she.

"'Aw, nothin' particular,' says I. 'Just made a *Kaley* or two. The gentleman there lost his way in the bog an' he 's warmin' himself before he starts out again.'

"All the time I was winkin' at Mary to speak to the boy-o; for I thought it powerful *un*-genteel to stand there wi'out addressin' him. At last, she comes round, an' drops a curtsey, an' says she in a haltin' kind o' way, not a bit like Mary's usual way o' talkin', for, as ye all know, she 's blessed wi' the gift o' the gab: 'Savin' your presence, sir,' says she, 'for appearin' in these duds afore ye, but I — was — loath — to wait long — for I was a — afraid some — somethin' had ha — happened when I heard — heard — '

"Not another word could she get out; I could see her eyes openin' wide, an' her jaw droppin', an' she fell a-tremblin'. For the boy-o

just riz his eyes 'n looked at her, kept them hard on her, an' never moved a muscle, nor spoke a word, nor stopped puffin' blue blazes out o' my ould cutty.

"All of a sudden Mary turns to me, white as a corpse, an' says she: 'God in Heaven! John Graham, who 's this? an' what 's goin' to happen to us at all, at all?'

"I could n't answer; an' I thought Mary was goin' into a fit.

"'Look at the moath o' him,' shouts she; 'blue flames comin' out o' it! An' his nose! An' look at his eyes! An' — Aw God help us!' she screeched; '*look at his feet! — cloots, cloots, cloots! — It's the divil himself!*'

"An' with that she tears from the kitchen up into her room an' bolts the door.

"I was fair flabbergasted. What could I do? Thinks I, what brings th' ould boy to my fireside? I rubs my head an' looks hard at him; then gets up, an' creepin' to the table empties the lemonade bottle down my throat. Boys! but poteen 's the darlint stuff; it put a new heart in me, an' cleared my head, an' made me feel fit to fight twenty divils.

"Off I peels my waistcoat; tucks up my shirt

sleeves; spits on my hands; then up I steps to Mister Satan.

" 'Ye ould ragamuffin,' says I, an' whacks my fist, 'what brings ye roamin' like a roarin' lion to decent Protestan' houses? Did ye ever hear tell o' Red John Graham,' says I, 'that hits man or divil like the kick o' a horse? Look at the face o' him then,' an' I looks straight at him; 'look at him,' says I, 'ye tarnation ould scare-crow; look an' trimble, Mister Beelzebub! Ye 're in the wrong house this night, ye flamin' ould tinker ye,' says I. 'Your kind is n't here, Apollyon. I 'm Red John, my boy, that fears neither man nor divil. Let me at your face,' says I; an' from the bedroom comes Mary's voice shoutin' '*Harroo, John! pelt the ould vagabone; pepper him, John.*' '*I will, Mary,*' I shouts, '*I will* — Come out! — stand up! — give me three minutes at your wizened countenance, till I leave ye a laughin' stock for your own angels!'

"Then I made a grab," shouted John, knocking his chair over as he jumped up, and upsetting his tumbler as he made a false catch at his neighbour's hair; "I made a grab at the head o' him, just like that. '*Come out!*' roars I;

'come out an' be kilt!' An' with the word I fell on my head in the corner over an *empty* chair."

"Gone?" cried the widow. "He was gone?"

"Ay," answered John; "when I came to there was no one there but Mary flingin' water over me an' roarin' '*Meila Murther.*'"

"Prime," went up the voices. "Prime." "Bully for you, John!" "Tight boy, John:" then from halfway down the table came the voice of a sceptic.

"Well," it said, "in my own experience I 've known poteen do *quare* things; but never, before this night, did I hold it responsible for makin' a man the biggest liar at a wake. Is there no one else? Och! is there no one else? Can no one tell a *sober* lie for a change?"

John leant over the table towards the sceptic.

"Young man," he said, "ye call me a liar an' ye say I was drunk. Your years an' the house we 're in 'll excuse ye this time; but never again, mind, never again. An' if you or any other person here repeats such things, I 'll take ye home, an' prove my words by sittin' ye in the very chair the ould boy sat in — an' I 'll give ye the wiggin' I meant for him, into the bargain."

Her Soger Boy.

Her Soger Boy.

In Lismahee workhouse there is a special ward to which are assigned most of those local unfortunates whose wits God has taken from them, leaving them mere life, and harmless strength, and the blank innocence of second childhood; and it was there, one day, that I first saw old Debbie Chance. A little wizened body she was, with gray hair hanging in loose ringlets upon her shoulders, large gray eyes, a smooth high forehead, and a face almost ethereal in its blank delicacy. One's eyes fixed her at once, in the long bare room, as she sat bolt upright in her bed supping thin gruel from a blue and white basin; she looked such a simple old child; she was so clean and neat, so harmlessly fragile in face and figure, as her spoon, poised delicately between finger and thumb, made a dainty curve from bowl to mouth, that one could

not forbear pausing at her bed-foot the better to have pleasure in the sight of her. To nothing could I compare her but a withered flower; her old beauty attracted me strangely, and I was just about to step to her side, when suddenly her spoon clattered into the basin, her fore-finger shot out towards me, and her eyes met mine with a quick, tense stare of witless terror. Like the beady eyes of a snake hers now were; before them and the steady insistence of her levelled finger, I stepped hurriedly back and clutched the arm of my friend the Doctor. Almost did I expect her to spring at me; and I was turning to go, when sharply (with a noise like the bursting of a toy balloon) she clicked her tongue against her palate and her finger shot straight for me again. I moved a step, the finger followed me; another step, and her tongue clicked again as her finger darted; another step, and the spoon was once more carrying its little mouthfuls of gruel, and Debbie was herself again, and I found myself breathing.

"Routed," said the Doctor, with a laugh, as we passed from the ward. "Raked fore and aft!"

"Yes," said I, "you 're right, Doctor. Mercy!

how my heart turned over — just as though I had been standing before a levelled gun. But — but does the old lady always give visitors such a reception ?"

" Only inquisitive visitors."

" Ah ! And why does she do it, Doctor ? "

"God knows, my son ; I don't."

" It 's her madness of course — some delusion or other of her mind ? "

" Mind ! " said the Doctor, and laughed again. " My dear fellow, she has none — not so much as a six weeks' baby. She 's an empty house — an empty house."

" But wait, Doctor," I persisted ; " she can't be quite empty. *What* prompted her to see me, to shoot her finger at me, to pop her tongue in that strange fashion? Surely she had some reason — ? "

" She has no reason," said the Doctor. " What you saw her do is as purely mechanical an action as the handling her porridge spoon. Both for her may mean something or mean nothing ; for me, that particular one means simply that she is a harmless lunatic."

" And there 's no story, no event of her life which might explain . . . ? "

"Ah, now you touch bottom," said the Doctor, "now you're talking, my boy. Yes, there is a story, and no bad one either. But, look here, it's Board day and I'm due with my report; so, if you're very anxious for information about old Debbie, just step down the lawn there to the pump house; there you'll find Solomon Gray, and if he can't satisfy you no man can. Away now; I'll give you half an hour."

William Gray was an Ancient and a pauper, very withered, very bald, a relic of old decency. In the long ago William had been a man of parts and shrewdness, a kind of hillside Solomon, in fact (hence his nickname); now wisdom had justified herself, and Solomon, his old back doubled, his old head bobbing, and his throat venting dismal groans, was taking his weekly turn at the wheel of the workhouse pump, and (so it seemed to me) knowingly allowing his fellow Ancient at the opposite handle to do more than his rightful share.

However, that was his affair, not mine; so I sidled into the pump-house, and, facing Solomon, gave him the time of day. Once or twice he looked at me between his arms as his hands went up, once or twice he groaned exceedingly; then:

"Aisy, Thomas," he called, and as the pump stopped: "Good mornin' to *you*, sir. It 's good weather."

"It is, Mr. Gray," I answered.

"Well, dear be thanked," he said, and heavily sighed, "for the chance to stretch me back. A nice kind o' work they give one these parts in his ould age?"

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Gray. By the way, I 've just come to speak a while with you. Dr. Sharp —"

"Ay," said he; "but tell me now ha' ye a pipe o' tabaccy wi' ye?"

"No," said I, "I 'm afraid I have n't; but —" and I pulled out a cigar — "if this will serve you you are welcome to it."

"It 's 'baccy, is n't it?" he asked, and taking the cigar in his withered claw vigorously sniffed at it. "Ay — it 'll do," said he, and bringing forth his black clay pipe and an old knife, began to whittle my havannah into his fist.

"It 's about old Deborah Chance I 've come to ask you, Mr. Gray," I went on, when the pipe was filled and patiently Solomon was striving to strike a match on its bowl. "Do you know her? rather, did you know her before she came to her

present pitiable state? And if you did, can you tell me why she lost her mind, and how, and —?"

"And wherefore?" interrupted Solomon, as sitting down on the wheel-handle he doubled over his knees and fell to sucking at his pipe. "Yis, an' wherefore, as the Acts o' Parlemint put it. Ay, I do know somethin' of her — But tell me," said he, and looked knowingly up at me (even as a sparrow cocks its eye at the sky), "suppose the master comes an' finds me confabbin' wi' ye, who 'll stand atween us?"

"You mean, Mr. Gray, that you can't work and talk at the same time?"

"I do — I do so. What 's your opinion, Thomas, there beyond?"

"I 'm with ye, Solomon," croaked the other Ancient; "mortial man could n't do it."

"Very well, then," said I, "very well, then; if you have anything to tell me I 'll answer for your safety for fifteen minutes. Will that do?"

"It will maybe," said he, and blew a puff of smoke through the doorway, "an' if more's wanted sure I can chance it." For a while he sat pondering; then fell a-mumbling. "Debbie Chance, Debbie Chance, what do I know o' Debbie Chance? Aw yis; I know. Poor ould

Debbie! often me heart 's ached for ye. Aw yis — an' tell me, sir," he said, and cocked his eye at me again, "what might ye be givin' me for this story o' mine? Eh, mister?"

Hurriedly I pulled out a shilling, (how pitiful a reward — even for wisdom degraded and degenerate!) flashed it before his eyes; and even as I pocketed it again, Solomon straightened his back, passed his pipe to his brother Ancient, and, throwing ten years off his shoulders, went on very much after this fashion: —

"If you take across the country straight from the gate below there and follow your nose for about six miles, you 'll come to a wee town called Knock — a weeny bit o' a town with just one street, and a couple o' shops, and a graveyard outside it, and a church, and a schoolhouse, and a forge; with the fields all round it, and the hills at the back, and the road to Clogheen runnin' through it. That 's how I mind it, anyway, afore I put on my uniform; and it was like that the time Debbie Chance first came to it, and when she left it, and they tell me that every store in it is the same to this day.

"Well, now, if you enter Knock by way o' the Lismahee road you 'll find that where it cuts the

street there stands a public house on the left-hand corner, and straight before you, t'other side o' the street, you 'll see a wee thatched house with a square window in its front and a green door wi' one stone step leading up to it; and if you ax any one to this day where Debbie Chance used to live they 'll turn an' point straight at that very house. Yes; many 's the time I 've been in it myself (when I was younger — och, och! and had an eye for good looks); many 's the time an' often I 've chatted with Debbie in her wee kitchen; an' often I 've stood, since she met her mishap, lookin' down at that doorstep and thinkin' to myself what happened to her there years and years ago.

"Ay, it 's wonderful how the years go, sirs; wonderful. Who 'd think that it must be nigh forty years since Debbie first came to Knock in her widdy's weeds, and rented that wee house, and set up her huckster's shop, and there set to workin' the skin off her bones strivin' to keep the breath in the bodies o' herself an' her son? Strivin'? 'T was slavery she did, pure slavery; but no matter, like one 's self, she 's restin' now, she 's restin' now.

"The first day I seen her, I mind me, I thought

she was as handsome a woman as God ever made — yes, and I think so yet. Small she was, but odious fine i' the bone, mindin' you of a race horse in its prime; and the hair of her was black as night and as thick and wavy as hearse plumes; an' to nothin' in this world could you compare the skin on her but an October apple; and just as much the lady she was in her ignorant countrified way as if 't was a coach and four she drove to Clogheen and not an ass's cart. Sure the men raved about her — ay, I was taken that way myself for a while, and at first the women hated her; but love or hate was all one to Debbie — a widdy woman she was, with her man dead in his grave an' his child to support, and what one or another said about her mattered less than the price o' a clay pipe in her windy. Naw! they might talk an' talk; but words never kept the bit from her mouth or made life the easier for her. 'T was poverty, sirs, bitter poverty that lay upon her and crushed her down. Man, dear! but she must ha' known the hard times there behind her bit of a counter, strivin' to turn a shillin' into thirteenpence; day in, day out, all the year long, servin' out her bits o' tabaccy, an' ounces

o' tay, an' skeins o' wool, an' penn'orths o' sweets, an' fillin' up every odd minute by knittin' socks, an' workin' lace, an' mendin' the clothes o' the boy; workin' it seemed for ever an' ever, Amen. When you rose in the mornin' Debbie was at it; when you went to bed her candle was still burnin'; go when you would, there she sat behind her counter as clean as a new pin an' as bright, always wi' the ready word for ye, and always as cheerful as a lark. No man ever heard her complain, or ax for charity; and man or woman never seen her idle.

"Well, sirs, time went on, and Debbie got oulder, an' Tim the son grew up to be a fine, healthy, stirrin' chap. The life o' Knock he was, him and his curls an' blue eyes, an' the darlint surely o' his mother's heart. You could see her watchin' him through the sweet bottles an' fal-lals in her windy when he was playin' in the street, struttin' up and down wi' an ould tin can for a drum an' a little army o' childer fifin' an' shoutin' at his heels; you could see her sittin' on the doorstep o' evenin's teachin' him to read; an', come weal or woe, she always had him well dressed an' well shod; an' to her last penny

she was ready to give him all the book learnin' he could get. The light o' her eye he was; yes, the light o' her eye an' the pride o' her heart; but about him she had one dread — that he was growin' too fond o' drums an' guns an' scarlet-red. Ay! 't was true; all he thought of was sogers, sogers. He 'd go ten miles to see one; every youngster in Knock he 'd have always fightin' an' stormin' forts, an' chargin' like blazes down the street; an' when Debbie 'd see him stridin' about wi' his imitation sword an' gun, she 'd run an' catch him, an' drag him in, an' fill his ears wi' the horrors o' war, an' read about it to him from books, an' quote the Bible to him, an' on her knees beg of him never, never to leave her and go to be shot in foreign parts. Aw the foolishness o' mothers! for all that only made him worse; an' in the end one day, when his girth was big enough, he slopes off; an' next time Debbie seen him 't was in scarlet-red.

"Then begins her real trouble — God help her! Woeful she was changed — grown pale an' fidgety, an' eyes in her full o' dread. She seemed to be always prayin'; every day she 'd go to the post-office to see if the papers said

anything about war; in church o' Sundays, when the Rector 'd say, 'from war and rumours of war,' Debbie 'd cry out: 'Good Lord deliver us' as if her heart was breakin'; an' now she had only one thing to live for — to see the day when Tim's time was up an' he was back to her safe an' sound. Aw, sirs, she must ha' suffered hard those days, suffered odious wi' that dread upon her that there was no knowin' when war 'd come an' a bullet for her darlin'.

"But no bullet came, aw no; only one day home comes Tim in his regimentals an' tells her, wi' pride dancin' in his eyes, that his regiment was leavin' Clogheen an' was ordered abrood.

"'Abrood?' says Debbie, an' gasps at the word. 'Abrood!' says she.

"'Yes, abrood,' says Tim; an' goes on to tell her all about it; about the goin' aboard a big ship, an' crossin' the bay o' Biscay, an' passin' Gibraltar, an' goin' through the Red Sea where King Pharaoh was drowned, an' on away round the world till they came to where the people wore no clothes, an' the sun burnt you like fire, an' there were tigers to eat you, an' elephants to carry you, an' big snakes crawlin' up the trees, an' all the wonders o' the world. 'Aw,

it 'll be great, mother,' says Tim; 'sure I 'm longin' to see it all.'

"'Ay,' says Debbie, wi' a choke. 'Ay, Tim.'

"'An' maybe, mother,' says Tim, 'there 'll be a chance o' fightin' out there wi' the darkies, an' then we 'll slaughter them, an' I 'll come back to ye wi' a medal on my breast, an' I 'll be made a sergeant, an' —'

"But Debbie stops him and rises.

"'Tim,' says she, 'sure you could n't do it! Aw, you could n't do it!'

"'What, mother?' says he.

"'Sure you could n't do it — you could n't leave me here alone! Aw! I 'll never see you again; you 'll be shot! Aw, no, no, me son!' Then Tim laughs.

"'Ah whisht, woman, dear,' says he; 'whisht! Sure it 'll only be for a year or two. I 'll be back in no time at all.'

"'You won't go,' cries Debbie, an' falls on her knees; 'you must n't. I 'll not let you. You 're all I 've got in the world. Ah, no, Tim. Stay here wi' me an' I 'll work night an' day for you; I 'll go wi' you wherever you like. Stay wi' me, Tim, me son!'

"'I can't, mother,' says he. 'I 'm a soger, mother, an' must do me duty. Go I must an' go I will.'

"'You 'll — you 'll leave me, Tim? You 'll go to get shot, or poisoned, or stabbed in the back? You 'll —'

"'Ach, whisht wi' ye, woman,' says Tim, 'wi' your nonsense. Am n't I a soger? D' ye see the uniform on me? Would you have me not see the world, an' not have a turn wi' gun an' bagonet? Ah, whisht! Is it a coward you 'd have me turn?'

"Well, for a while longer Debbie keeps on, beggin' an' prayin', an' cryin' her eyes out — aw the poor foolish woman; but, at last, seein' 't was all no use, she rises from her knees, wipes her eyes, an' sits down before the fire. 'Well, Tim,' says she, 'God's will be done, an' God protect ye.'

"'Amen, mother,' says Tim, an' lights his pipe. 'Amen;' then puts his elbows on his knees, an', just as if he was viewin' the whole round world in the fire, goes on wi' his boys' chatter about all he was goin' to do, an' see, an' bring back wi' him, — shawls an' bonnets for the mother, an' monkeys, an' parrots, an' picters

o' foreign parts, an' all the rest; an' to all o' it Debbie gives only half an ear, for her eyes were busy wi' Tim's curls an' red coat, an' her heart was sore, an' all she could think o' was: 'He 'll be shot, he 'll be shot — How can I keep him?'

"At last she leans forward and puts her hand on the lad's arm.

"'You 'll stay wi' me this one night, Tim?' says she. 'You 'll let your ould mother see the sun rise on ye once more?'

"'I will,' says Tim; 'I have leave to stay, an' I will,' says he.

"'Thank God,' says Debbie; 'thank God!' And from that on she was cheerfuller an' gave full ear to the boy's ramblin' tongue.

"Well, the night passed; an' betimes the next mornin' Tim wakes up, an' after a yawn or two tumbles out o' bed. He takes a look out o' the windy at the mornin', then wheels about quick for his regimentals; but lo an' behold ye! not a dud o' them was to be seen, not a dud. 'Damme! what 's this?' says he, scratchin' his head. 'What 's this?' an' high an' low searches; then, findin' nothin', calls out for the mother.

"'What is it, Tim, me son?' says she from behind the door. 'What is it, me son?'

"'Where's me regimentals?' says he. 'I left them on the chair here last night, an' now they're gone.'

"'Your regimentals!' says she. 'Your beautiful red coat wi' the shinin' buttons, an' your—!'

"'Come, mother,' says Tim, 'no foolery! Where are they?'

"'Ah! it's the hand o' God!' cries she (the poor, foolish woman!). 'Aw, Tim, me son, the Lord's sent some thief to—'

"'Thief!' roars Tim, an' swears accordin'. 'Thief yourself! Where's me uniform?'

"'Aw, son Tim, son Tim,' cries Debbie, 'it's the Lord's doin'! But, Tim,' calls she, 'there's the Sunday suit you used to wear in the press by the bed; put it on, me son, an' come down an' we'll search for the thief. We'll get the police, Tim.'

"So Tim, mighty mad an' swearin' powerful (as sogers will), for he guessed the run o' things, jumps into his ould tweed suit, then dunders into the kitchen an' catches Debbie by the arm as she comes to kiss him.

"'Here,' says he, 'none o' your foolery. Get me my clothes.'

"'I give ye my word, Tim —' Debbie begins; but Tim only shakes her. 'Get them for me,' says he, 'an' quick, or, by the Lord! I 'll make ye.' And at that Debbie goes down on her knees and clasps her hands.

"'Ah, son Tim,' says she, 'forgive me — forgive me — but I can't spare ye — I can't spare ye. I nursed ye, Tim, an' reared ye; you 're all I 've got —'

"'Where 's my uniform?' shouts he wi' an oath.

"'I — I burnt it,' says Debbie; an' at the word Tim flung her from him.

"'Burnt me uniform!' says he. 'Burnt the Queen's scarlet!' says he, and grips her arm. Then, a thought strikin' him, he turns to the hearthstone — an' there was the ashes raked over the coals just as he 'd seen Debbie leave it the night before. 'Ye ould liar ye!' he shouts, an' grips her again. 'It 's disgrace me you 'd do — ha' me arrested for a deserter — ha' me walk down the street in handcuffs — where 's me uniform?' he roars, an' lifts his arm.

"'No — no,' says Debbie, liftin' her hands. 'Aw, I can't spare ye, Tim. You 'll be shot — you 'll be shot.'

"Then Tim turns an' lifts the tongs from the hearth.

"'One more chance I 'll give ye,' he said; 'an' only one. Find me my uniform before I count twenty, or before the Lord I 'll brain ye!'

"Aw, sirs, to think o' what the army 'll do for a man! To think Tim Chance could be brought to speak to his mother like that — his poor simple mother that would ha' given her heart's blood for him! Ah! sirs.'

"Debbie cowers back; surely — surely that was n't Tim?

"'. . . *Seven, eight, nine, ten* . . . .'

"'Ah, Tim, me son; Tim, me son!'

"'. . . *Fourteen, fifteen* . . . .'

"'. . . Your poor ould mother! . . . .'

"'. . . *Nineteen* . . . .'

"The tongs were up; black murder was on Tim's face; not from fear — for death would ha' come welcome to her just then, but in simple despair Debbie threw up her hands.

"'No — no, Tim,' cries she; 'no — no; I 'll tell ye; I 'll tell ye.'

"So Debbie brings in the uniform from where she 'd hid it in the turf-stack out in the garden; an' Tim washes himself, an' buttons it on, an', after his breakfast, lights his pipe, an' prepares for the road. In the divil's own humour he was still, black an' angry; an' he stalks for the door as if to go wi'out a word. But Debbie, all tremblin' an' pale, runs after him an' takes his arm.

"'Tim, Tim,' she says 'is it go ye would wi'out forgivin' me, or sayin' good-bye?' He never turned; but Debbie clung hard to him.

"'Tim, Tim,' she calls; 'my God! Tim, ye may never see me again!'

"'I don't care,' says he through his teeth, 'ye tried to disgrace me;' wi' that shakes his mother off an' swaggers off in his scarlet-red down the street."

Solomon rose, pocketed his pipe, and spat on his hands.

"Come, Thomas," said he, "to work, me son, or they 'll have no water for the porridge come the mornin'. Come on, I can see the master squintin' yonder in the porch."

"Finish your story first," said Thomas; "don't stop at the glory be."

"Ah, yis," said Solomon, and gripped his handle; "ah, yis. That's easily done. Tim swaggers off, as I tell ye — he told the whole story to the post-boy before he was half way to Clogheen; an' down Debbie falls wi' her arms out an' her face on the doorstep; an' when we picked her up she was limp as a rag an' as senseless. She lay ravin' in Clogheen infirmary for weeks ('t was there Tim seen her before he went abroad, repentin' when 't was too late); an' when her brain lost the fever, she was as ye can see her now above in the ward — as witless as a rabbit. But sometimes, they say, at sight o' a stranger she 'll go like that (and Solomon popped his tongue and shot out his finger), an' then — well, who knows? But ye 'll remember, sir, that just before she was struck her mind was full o' dread that Tim was goin' off to be shot. Aw yis — aw yis!"

I put my shilling into Solmon's palm; thanked him for his story, and hurried off to find the Doctor.

Rogue Bartley.

Rogue Bartley.

It was fair day in Bunn, and the five o'clock train out was, in consequence, packed from buffer to buffer. Hardly could one breathe, even by the open window of our long third-class compartment; assuredly could not one move a limb for the crowd and crush—of foul-mouthed jobbers reeking of whisky and tobacco; of noisy farmers reeking of horses and cattle; of women laden with baskets of groceries, and bags of flour, and red handkerchiefs of sundries: it was wonder that the crawling train did not creak its last and collapse on the line. As my neighbour (a little black man dressed decently in tweed, with a shrewd face and the mouth of an orator) expressed it: "Faith, if I was this carriage I'd burst the sides in me; sure it's woful."

For all that we reached Ballyhob Junction safely; and there, such of us (not many, thank Heaven!) as were bound for Clogheen crossed the bridge, and presently took our seats in the up-train from Glann. Again I had a corner-seat; and again from my elbow came the voice of the little black man.

"Bedad," said he, mopping his brow, "it's heavenly to feel again that one has legs on him. Whisht!" whispered he, and leaning forward over my knees, pushed his head through the open window. "Who's this? Be the King! but it's Herself. Aw, Sir, is n't she a bouncer?"

As well as I could, I spied over the little man's hat, and saw coming down the bridge-stairs the lady whom my friend called Herself. Tall she was and sedate, well-dressed and handsome, neither in appearance nor face the least Irish; to her the farmers touched their hats, and the women curtsied, and the porter hastened that he might have the honour of turning the handle of her first-class carriage door. Who was she? I was asking myself with some curiosity, when the little man pulled his head in, laid his hand on my knees and knowingly winked at me.

"Eh," said he, "that's the sort; that's a pattern of a female for ye. Ye wid n't know her, now?" he asked.

I answered, "No."

"Aw, jist so," said he, and much to my relief sat back on his seat; "jist so. Ye'll be a stranger here?"

I answered, "Yes."

"Ay!" said he. "Well, that bein' so, of course ye could n't be acquaint wi' her. But I know her, right well I know her, no man better. An' more than that, I seen her once when for fifty pounds she would n't ha' had me see her. Yis, I did."

"Oh," said I. "Indeed?"

"Aw, it's truth. Ye're a stranger here, ye say?" he asked again, and shifting his seat faced me.

"I've said so."

"Ay!" said he; then, as the manner of rustics is, leant forward with his elbows on his knees, and his face as close as was possible to mine. "Ay! An' I suppose, now, in your travels ye never heard tell o' one Rogue Bartley? No! Well, well; such is life. But, whisht now, an' I'll tell ye about Herself an'

Bartley; a mighty curious story it is, an' it 'll divert ye, mebbe, from here to Clogheen, Off we go!" said he, as the train skirled; then knocked the ashes out of his pipe, crossed his arms on his knees, wet his lips, and began.

"Me name is Thomas Hurd," said he, in his slow, matter-of-fact way. "Wee Thomas they call me for a nickname. I live there beyond, three miles this side o' Clogheen, on a farm o' me own wi' me wife and six childer. Well, one day, I was standin' outside the open window o' the big house above at Kilpad, waitin'. . . . But wait, now; I 'm beginnin' me house at the chimneys; wait till I tell ye about Bartley.

"Him that I call Bartley was the youngest son, then, o' a family that not so very long ago held its head high in this part o' the world. French was their name — the Frenches o' Mohill — an' if, as I hear tell, their namesakes across the water are pretty high in the stomachs, faith these same were French by name an' French by nature. When I knew them, before they came down in the world, there was eight o' them: the father, mother, and four sons and two daughters; an' divil as handsome a set o' men an' women ye 'd

see again if ye travelled from here to kingdom come. Six fut ivery man o' them stood in his stockin's; an' the women folk could set their chins on the shoulder o' a sixteen-hand horse as easy as they could lace their boots. But, as I said, they were proud — odious proud; not passin' ye by, mind ye, wi' a sniff an' a prance like a circus horse, for they were as free wi' Tommy Hurd as they were wi' my Lord, but just carryin' themselves like five-year old stallions, as much as to say: 'I 'm willin' to notice ye, but dang your buttons! keep your distance.' An' the divil-me-care set they were; tearin' here an' there over the country, niver in the house, fightin' like imps among themselves one minute, kissin' one another the next, shootin' all day, fishin' all night, hunting like blazes! Aw, 't was wonderful; an' surely a wonderful family were the Frenches, in these parts their like or equal no man could find.

"Well, they say pride has a fall, an', faith, it 's true o' the Frenches; for after a while times get bad, an' land goes down, an' money gets scarce, an' themselves, wi' their fine house an' carriages an' lashin's o' the best, found the curb begin to bite on them. Not that ye 'd notice

much — aw, no ; that was n't the way wi' them — but bit by bit things got bad here, an' worse there, till afore ye knew where ye were the father was dead, an' the mother — ah, Lord! the fine woman she was — was dead, an' the girls an' the brothers were scattered over the world, an' the house an' land were up for sale by the creditors. All in a twinkle ye 'd think it was ; and it was good-bye Frenches!

" But 't was about young Bartley I was tellin' ye — ay, Rogue Bartley. He was the youngest, an' the biggest, an' the quarest o' them all. Ah, a fine, handsome, dashin', hearty man was Bartley, wi' a voice in him like the organ in the church there beyond, an' a laugh like the roar of a bull, an' ivery limb on him as big an' hard as an anvil. Great King! to see Bartley on a horse, the set an' size o' him ; not the Duke of Wellin'ton himself could have filled a saddle better or boulder. Ay, Bartley was a hero. All the women in the country-side 'd ha' died for love o' him — ay, an' some o' them mebbe did worse ; an' the men — well, troth, the men looked sideways at him. Not that he was n't free an' easy wi' us all, ready wi' his joke an' glass like another, an' bubblin' over wi' good nature, as

ye 'd think. Ay! But somehow there was bad blood in him. Ye could n't trust him. He 'd laugh at your face an' spit at your back. An' when he laughed, somehow it was n't the heart o' him that laughed — naw! 't was the proud, rotten stomach o' him.

"Well, well, let him rest; he niver did me harm, an' the pride 's out o' him by this. Ay! But I 'm wanderin'."

Thomas fumbled in his pocket, brought out a bottle, uncorked it, and offered it to me. "It 's good," said he, as I shook my head; "the best in the world. Well, as ye like," said he, and put the neck between his teeth; "as ye like, but it 's easy seein' you 're a stranger to these parts.

"Well, as I was sayin'," Thomas went on, presently, "the Frenches lost all, an' got scattered, an' Bartley wi' them. 'T was to the States Bartley went wi' another o' the brothers; an' after that, 'cept for an odd word of a story that 'd go flyin' from the big house all round the country, for long enough sorrow a French ye 'd think had ever shot an Irish snipe. Good as dead they all were. Ay, ay; it 's the way o' the world.

" But one day, two years ago it was last June, if ye please, I was workin' in a field I have convenient to the Clogheen road, when, liftin' up me eyes at sound of a foot, who should I see but Bartley. Ay, troth, himself sure enough; but changed woful. Ould an' hungry he looked ; all skin an' grief, ye might say, wi' the clothes hangin' loose on him like the duds on a scarecrow. 'Ho, ho,' thinks I ; 'ho, ho, Bartley, me son, what 's this?' An' wi' that he mounts the ditch an' calls to me across the hedge, just as he used to do often enough in the ould times.

" 'Hello, Thomas,' calls he, free an' easy like that, Sir. 'How 's youself, Thomas?'

" 'Well," says I, startin' towards him, rubbin' the clay from me hand on me britches, 'I 'm middlin', thank ye, Mr. Bartley: an' how are you, Sir?'

" 'Aw, the best, Thomas,' says he, shakin' hands; 'the best. Ye see, I 'm back again in the ould country.'

"Yis,' says I; 'an' welcome ye are, Mr. Bartley; but, if it 's not makin' free, I can't say that the trip across the water 's done much for your health.'

"'Oh!' says he mighty sharp. 'How's that?'

"'Well,' I says, 'I mind the day you'd turn the scale at sixteen stone; an' now —'

"'Oh,' says he, turnin' his head, 'that's nothin', I've been ill. I suppose,' says he, turnin' the subject quick-like, 'some o' the ould friends are still alive — Doctor Sharp, an' Rector Hill?' an' mentions one an' another here an' there about the country.

"'Aw, 'deed they are,' I answers; an' goes on to tell the news: who was dead, an' who married, an' all the rest. An' Bartley listens mighty attentive till I'd run dry; then steps down off the ditch.

"'I'm obliged to ye, Thomas, for all your news,' says he. 'Good-day to ye, Thomas.'

"'Aw, good luck to you, Sir,' answers I; an' off me hero steps down the road, wi' his head back, an' his arms swingin', just the same as if the whole country belonged to him, an' there was still sixteen stone o' good Irish flesh inside the shabby coat o' him.

"Well, I seen Bartley again; aw, troth, I did, an' before long heard enough of him. Faith, afore two days the country was buzzin' about

him. For what d' ye think me gentleman does? Ye would n't guess in a month o' Sundays. First of all, away he goes to Dr. Sharp, an' pitches his tale about losin' his clothes in a shipwreck, an' bein' robbed in London, an' all the rest; stays the night there, an' in the mornin' starts off to Rector Hill's, carryin' the lend o' some o' the Doctor's clothes (the Doctor bein' a big lump of a man himself) in the Doctor's portmanty; an' at the Rector's he pitches his tale again, borrows five pound an' his umbrella from his Reverence, an' takes himself, by this gettin' fatter an' more decent lookin', to Banker Small's; an' there too, faith, makes himself agreeable, an' laves the house wi' some o' the Banker's shirts an' socks, an' all that, in the Doctor's portmanty. So, pickin' up a trifle here an' a trifle there, a sovereign from this man an' five shillin's from that — sure it was easy to do, for who 'd have the heart to refuse an ould friend, particularly an ould friend with a way wid him like Bartley French? — an' makin' himself at home everywhere; round the country Bartley goes (an' ye 'll observe, Sir, the foxy way that he pumped me about all his friends that were alive), an' before three days

was snug an' comfortable, portmanty an' all, in the big house over at Caroo — or, if ye like it better, at the house o' Sir George Townley, him, Sir, that 's landlord o' all these parts.

"An' then the spree begins. Troth, 't was as good as a play; though, o' course, no one had anythin' but pity at the time for the poor shipwrecked crature; an' glad we all were to see him in clover above at Sir George's. Aw, yis, we were mighty soft; but Bartley knew what he was about; he knew how to rattle down his ace o' trumps. Sure inside a week he was kickin' the roof off Caroo, for the stone walls o' it could n't stand the flings o' him. Ye 'd think 't was the Lord Lieutenant himself, all the airs he had. 'T was orderin' the servants here; an' swearin' at the grooms there; an' shootin' all day long; an' ridin' Sir George's horses off their legs; an' kickin' the coat-tails off the butler; an' bangin' his skull against the roof till no one knew his feet from his head; an' they tell me that not a female in the house but 'd ha' given her immortal soul to him.

"Anyway, that may be here or there; all I can swear to is, that the first Sunday I seen Bartley steppin' out o' Sir George's carriage at

the church door, he looked as swarthy an' fat as a grass bull; an' dang me, if he did n't show off other people's clothes better than they iver did themselves! An' to hear the sweet voice o' him singin' that beautiful behind in the big family pew, an' callin' *Amen* twice as loud as Sir George; an' to see the sleek, pious look o' him; an' to see all the women squintin' back at him — Och, och, 't was wonderful, wonderful!

"An' then, lo an' behold ye! the next thing we hear is that Bartley is keepin' company wi' Miss Mary, Sir George's maiden sister, her that was forty, if she was a day, an' as plain as a church wall — mad in love wi' her, the sayin' was, an' makin' as fast as man could for the ring an' weddin' bells. Day in, day out, there they were, walkin' together along the road, sittin' together in church, sailin' together on the lake, an' iver an' always chatterin' like jackdaws, an' laughin' at times as hearty as play-actors. An', sorrow take me, if we could all make it out; for plain it was to be seen that Bartley was only courtin' Miss Mary's money, an' had n't returned the coats, an' shirts, an' boots, an' what not to the people that owned them; an' that he had n't a penny piece o' his own

jinglin' in his pocket. Howsomever, that was Bartley's affair; an' if he was clever enough to hoodwink the quality — an', troth, that same is n't hard to do — what were we to do but keep our tongues in our cheeks an' laugh to ourselves? Anyway, things went on like that for about two months; an' then, just as we all were expectin' a bonfire an' a big dinner in honour o' the marriage, the thing happened that I 've now to tell ye about."

Thomas lit his pipe, whiffed hard for a while: then wiped its stem on his sleeve and offered it to me. I thanked him, but said I did not smoke; at which he returned the pipe to his pocket, crossed his legs, and went on.

"I had occasion, one day about the time I 'm tellin' ye of, to go on a matter o' business to see Sir George; an', as the custom is, had taken up me stand on the terrace outside the open window o' Sir George's room. The window was open — 't was one o' these foreign affairs that opens like a door — an' as I stood wi' me back against the wall, I could see over me shoulder wi' the tail o' me eye into the room. A fine big room 't was, full o' beautiful pictures an' things; an' Himself sat over in the corner

by the fireplace. That mornin' he happened to be busy, an' I waited a tidy while before he called to me to state me business. So off I takes me hat, turns round, an' bobbin' me head, as the way is, begins to say me say. But hardly had I cleared me throat, when the door o' the room opens, an' in walks one o' these play-boys in livery, wi' a big bright tray, an' a bit of a card on it, that he presents, as if 't was a thousand-pound note, to Sir George. Himself takes it an' looks at it; an' quick his eyes opened an' his mouth, and says he:

"'Who brought this?' says he.

"'A lady, Sir George,' says the boy-o.

"'A lady?' answers Himself. 'An' where is she?'

"'Waitin', Sir George, in the hall for an answer, Sir George,' says the lad.

"Then Himself whacks the table; an', 'Damme!' he says that fierce; for a wrathful man is Sir George, an' at times rough in his speech. 'Damme!' says he; then tells the play-boy to leave the room; an' meself, too, seein' I was n't wanted just then, steps aside, an' puts me back against the wall in the ould place.

"Well, soon as the door shut, up jumps Sir George from his chair an' begins to march about the room. 'What's this?' he says to himself, an' looks at the bit of a card. 'Damme! what's this?'

"Like that he kept mutterin' to himself, an' prancin' up an' down like a two-year-old colt; after a bit goes to a press, takes a mouthful o' spirits from a bottle (sure it made me laugh to see how much like another these quality are when they're by themselves); then makes for the bell-rope an' pulls it. In comes me play-boy again sharp and quick. 'Show the lady up,' says Himself; and before ye could say knife, Sir George was back in his chair and the play-boy in livery was showin' a lady into the room.

"'*Mrs. Bartley French*,' says he, in a big voice; an', faith, sir, at the word I could hardly keep from whistlin'. 'Ho, ho!' says I to meself; 'here's sport;' an' wi' that stands as close to the wall as I could, just keepin' the tail o' me eye on Sir George's end o' the room.

"Sir George rises mighty polite, an' bobs his head, an' asks the lady to take a chair;

an' Herself, in her cloak an' feathers, thanks him an' sits down; then, all quiverin', says she:

"'Sir George Townley,' says she, 'what's the meanin' o' all this? Have n't ye been expectin' me?' says she. 'Why did n't Bartley come to meet me? Where is Bartley?' she says, half risin' from her chair.

"But Sir George sits as cool as ye please, an' looks hard at her, an' says:

"'Excuse me, ma'am' — or words like that— 'but may I ax who ye are?'

"'Who I am?' says Herself, an' stares at him like a bull at a gate. 'Who I am! Ye don't know me?'

"'No,' says he, that cool; 'I don't know ye, ma'am; nor have I ever heard of ye before this day.'

"Then Herself rises an' looks at Sir George as if she was mad.

"'Never heard o' me!' says she. 'My God! what does this mean? Tell me,' says she; 'is n't this Caroo House? An' are n't you Sir George Townley?'

"'Yes,' says he, like that.

"'And is n't me husband, Bartley French, stayin' here as your guest?' says she.

"But Sir George smiles an' waves his hand, an' he answers polite:

"'Excuse me, ma'am' — or words like that — 'but before I answer —'

"An' at that Herself breaks out again.

"'Oh, my God!' she says; 'what is all this? What is this that has happened to me?'

"She stood like one bewildered for a while, with Sir George still lookin' hard at her; then all at once she turns to him an' says:

"'Sir George Townley,' says she, 'I can't tell ye whether I am asleep, or awake, or mad. I believe I 'm mad. I can't understand where I am or what has happened to me. I have travelled here all the way from America, expectin' to find me husband with ye, to find him waitin' for me at the station, to be welcomed by you, an' — an' — Sir George, for God's sake! tell me if Bartley is here or has been here. *Is* he here, Sir George?'

"Then Himself rises, and lays his hand on her arm, aud asks her to sit down.

"'Mrs. French,' says he, 'before I tell ye anythin' about your husband, I must ask ye a question or two.'

"An' before another word was said in comes

me play-boy in livery again, an' hands Sir George a telegram.

"He excuses himself, tears it open, reads it, an' crumples it up tight in his fist. 'The scoundrel!' he shouts, jumpin' up with a face like a thunderstorm. 'The scoundrel!'

"'Is it from Bartley?' asks Herself, lookin' up.

"'Yes,' says Sir George, an' looks down at her. 'It is from Bartley. Ye may read, Mrs. French;' an' he smooths out the telegram an' hands it to her. But she says, No; she'd rather Sir George read it; so Himself spreads his legs before the fireplace an' reads. Wi' every ear I had I listened:

"'LIVERPOOL,' reads Sir George (sure I mind the words like me prayers). *'To Sir George Townley, Caroo House, Ireland. Arrived here safely this mornin'. Sail this evenin.' Thanks for your loan an' hospitality. My wife will probably be with ye to-day. Be very good to her. Sorry I could not wait to see her. My love to her an' Polly. Good-bye for ever.* — BARTLEY FRENCH.'

"'Good-bye for ever,' says Sir George again. 'The scoundrel!' says he; an' then for a while ye could hear a pin drop in the room. Herself's face was turned to the window, an' the

look that was on it was just the same as I seen once on a man's face when the news came to him that his bank was smashed — a kind o' dazed, hopeless look. An' Sir George stood lookin' down at her wi'out openin' his lips. At last she kind o' choked an' turns her head.

"'When did he go, Sir George?' says she.

"'Yesterday; by the mail train,' says he.

"'An' — an' he never told ye — anythin' about me?' says she.

"'Not one word,' answered Sir George; 'not one word. He borrowed some money of me; promised when his business was done he'd come back to mar — The ruffian!' says Sir George; then pulls himself up. 'That was all, Mrs. French,' says he; 'that was all.'

"'Did he say where — where he was going?' says Herself, in a broken kind o' way.

"'To America,' answers he. An' at the word I hears a sob, an' then another, an' then a burst o' bitter cryin'.

"Lord, Sir, it was ojus: the sweat broke out over me at the sound o' it. But Sir George sits down, puts his hands together, an' looks at his boots; nor sorrow a word crossed his lips till Herself wiped her eyes an' looked at him.

"'Oh, Sir George,' says she, 'Sir George, I — I could n't help it!' An' Himself leans over, like he was her father, an' puts his hand on her arm, an' tells her that he pities her from his heart, an' that he 'll help her all he can, an' that meantime the best thing she can do is tell him all she knows.

"Well, sir, she was loth to tell him much at first (sure I respected her all the more for it), an', I suspect, she had little heart to do it; but, after a while, what with Sir George's soft manner an' his coaxin' questions, bit by bit she let the whole story out — a powerful long rigmarole that I disremember, an' would n't have time to tell ye anyhow. But the long an' the short of it was this:

"She was a Yankee, a play-actress it seems; an' she married Bartley because, as she said, he kind o' made her; an' because, as one could see, she was powerful in love wi' him. Ay, Bartley had that sootherin' way wi' the women always an' ever; an', faith, with Herself, it seems, he had more ways than one; for, what d 'ye think? but he gives out to her that he was the son o' an Irish duke or somebody, an' had a power o' money, an' a whole

county o' land over here, an' was only in America for a holiday! Did ever ye hear the like, Sir, in all your born days? And Herself, the crature, as women will, believed him, an' thought she had married the best o' men an' the richest. But, after a while, she found out that, duke's son or not, Mister Bartley was little better himself than another. Ay, she did so. He took to drinkin', an' gamblin', an' the sorrows own diversion; an' from that, it was easy to see, though she did n't say it, that he took to worse; for the end o' it was that one day Herself packs up her traps an' leaves him to his devices. An' right too, say I. But och, och, the foolishness o' women — the foolishness o' them! For, after a while, back comes Bartley in his rags an' tatters, an' on his knees begs her to forgive him; sure it was her money he wanted; but no matter, women are fools, an' so Bartley gets her pardon.

"Well, after that things went pretty smooth, I suppose; till one day Bartley gives out that he 's comin' back to Ireland to collect his rents, and see about the property. Great King! Bartley's rent an' property! Sure it 's no wonder, Sir, that Sir George grinned at the

news. Anyway, off me gentleman sails in his big ship, but not to collect his rents. Aw, no! First thing, Herself has a letter from Paris, makin' his excuses an' askin' for money. Aw, yis; I 've heard o' Paris! Then, she has a letter from London, makin' more excuses an' askin' for more money. Aw, yis; I 've heard o' London! Then, he comes to Ireland (I 've told ye, Sir, the way he came to us after his divilments in Paris an' London), an' writes again to her, sayin' that he found his estates in good order, but the tenants would n't pay the rent, an' asks for a trifle more to take him on.

"'Did ye answer that letter, Mrs. French?' asks Sir George.

"'Yes, Sir George,' says she; 'but I sent no money; I could n't. Indeed I sent very little at any time.'

"'H'm!' says Sir George, with a kind o' smile on him, as much as to say: 'Aw, just so, Mrs. French; an' now Bartley is payin' ye back for that an' for all the rest.' I could see the words on his face. Ay!

"Well, after that the wife gets another letter from Mister Bartley, tellin' her that the family mansion was out o' repair, an' that for the present

he was enjoyin' the hospitality of his old friend, Sir GeorgeTownley, at Caroo House; an' on the tail o' that, comes another letter, sayin' that he had decided to settle down on his estates, that Herself was to come over at once, an' that, till the family mansion was ready, she was to stay, at Sir George's invitation, at the big house at Caroo.

"'The scoundrel!' says Sir George at this; 'the scoundrel! An', I suppose,' says he, thinkin', no doubt, o' Mary the sister, 'he never mentioned particular any members o' my family?'

"'No, Sir George,' answers Herself; 'no, except that ye were all very good, an' kind, an' would be delighted to see me. An' so, Sir George,' she says, 'of course I sold up the little home an' came.'

"'H'm!' says Sir George again; then rises to his feet. 'Well, Mrs. French,' says he, 'this Bartley French is the son of an old friend o' mine, an' you are his wife, so I won't say what I think of him; but this I will say, that a more heartless, blackguardly trick than this which he has just played on you I never before heard of. He came here — but no matter what he did here,'

says Sir George, pullin' himself up; 'no matter about that. It 's *you*, Mrs. French, you brought all this way from America, only to find yourself the victim o' this, this — Yes, damme! I will say it — this infernal, ruffianly scoundrel! I 'm a magistrate o' this county, an' —'

"Well, Sir, at that Sir George begins his prancin' about the room again, an' his snortin' an' spoutin'; so, dreadin' that in one o' his cavalcades past the window he might catch sight o' me, I just slipped away along the wall, an' I heard no more.

"No. But had n't I heard enough? Yes. An' the next day I heard more; for, would ye believe me, Sir?" said Thomas, leaning forward and tapping my knee with his hand, "Bartley went off the very day that Miss Mary promised to be his wife; an' more than that, went off with the Doctor's portmanty, an' inside it, a hundred pounds he 'd borrowed from Sir George an' every stitch an' penny he 'd cajoled from his friends! Now, what d' ye think o' that?" said Thomas, sitting up and looking hard at me. "Is it any wonder we gave him the name o' 'Rogue Bartley'?"

"No," said I; "it is no wonder. And I suppose he treated his wife in that heartless fashion bacause of —?"

"Because o' her leavin' him," said Thomas; "of course; an' refusin' him money — to be sure; an' because of a thousand things that were deep in the black heart o' him. Ay, yes, that was the great reason — the black blood in the black heart o' him. Whisht! she 's slowin'," said Thomas as the train slackened speed near Clogheen Junction. "An' now keep a sharp look-out for Herself on the platform, for she 's a bouncer; an' if you 're wide awake you 'll see Sir George waitin' for her in the carriage outside the station door."

"Herself?" said I.

"Aw, ay," said Thomas as he let down the window. "Aw, ay, it 's Herself sure enough; for Bartley got drunk in Liverpool an' was drowned in the say: an' now, faith, Herself is Mrs. Sir George."

The Splendid Shilling.

The Splendid Shilling.

I.

"PLEASE, Mr. John," said Mary the servant, "Master 's sent me for ye. He 's above in the front parlour."

"What does he want?" asked Mr. John, and raised his eyes. "Tell him I 'm busy."

"I did, Sir. I said the mower was bruk an' ye wur fixin' it; but he only roared at me. I 'd go, Mr. John; 'deed I wid."

"What the sorrow now?" said John, and put down his wrench on the stones of the yard. "*Roared*, ye say, Mary?"

"Ay! Och, Sir, spake him fair; don't anger him worse. I know what ails him. *Her* mother was here a while ago — it 's that, Mr. John."

"Ay," said John, and his face darkened. "Ay! An' what the devil brought *her* here?"

He rose from his knees, turned down his shirt-sleeves over his brown arms, then took his sleeved waistcoat from the pole of the mowing machine and buttoned it on. "Did she stay long, Mary?" asked he.

"No, Sir; only a wee while — but I heerd words."

"Ay," said John, and turned towards the kitchen door of the farmhouse. "Oh, just so!"

"Ye 'll spake him fair, Mr. John?" said Mary the servant, and ventured to lay her hand on his arm. "Och, ye will, Sir! Ye know, I 'd — we 'd be sorry to lose ye, Sir."

John hung on his heel for a step, and looked down at his little well-wisher standing bare-headed and bare-footed in her rags and tatters.

"Oh, ay," he said, and laughed. "Oh, ay! Never fear, Mary; I 'll speak him fair, true an' fair as a die. An' I 'm thankful to you, my girl, for the hint ye gave me; it 's as well to know."

Then his face fell solemn again; and, with his hands clasped across his back, he went in through the kitchen and along the red-flagged hall into the front parlour.

James Hewitt was sitting in an old leather arm-chair reading from a newspaper. A man of about sixty-five years he was, grey-headed, swarthy, large-limbed, strong of face, a fine type of your Ulster Protestant farmer, and the living image of what you would expect his son John to be when Time had added another forty or so to the sum of his years.

"Ye wanted me?" asked John, from his place by the door, where he stood fumbling with his cap.

His father lowered his newspaper and looked at him over the rims of his spectacles; then raised the sheet again as if to read.

"Yes," answered he, "I did. You 'd better sit down."

"I 'd rather stand. I 'm waitin'."

Both the words and the manner in which they were spoken were disrespectful; very seldom had child of his dared venture so to speak in the presence of James Hewitt. For once, however, the words passed unrebuked.

"Have ye mended that machine?" came from behind the newspaper.

"No; nor won't. Is that all?"

Clearly John foresaw a storm, and was for

brewing it at once. His father threw down his paper and sat forward in his chair.

"Won't; won't!" cried he, wrathfully. "What do ye mean, Sir? Have ye come here to defy me?"

"That's as maybe. I meant I could n't mend it."

"Then why did n't ye say so?"

"It's no odds. I'm waitin', I say. I know what I'm here for, so ye may as well say your say at once."

The two men eyed each other for a moment, straight and steadily: along the deep lines of the father's face anger was swiftly flushing; in John's eyes obstinacy was fast seated.

"Oh, ye know, do ye?" the father began; then all suddenly broke out: "How dare ye disobey me, Sir? Did n't I tell ye, last time I spoke to ye about this, that ye were to give up your — your foolishness wi' — wi' that hussy over there? Did n't I, Sir?"

"Ye did."

"Well?"

"Well, I did n't choose to obey ye. Why should I? A man can do as he likes, I suppose?" Suddenly John made a step from

the door. "Look here, father," said he, and his voice came low and solemn; "let 's be plain an' have done, for God's sake! It goes against me to be doin' what ye don't like, but that can't be helped. Ye asked me to give up Rachel Hoey, an' to have no more to say to her. Well, I have n't given her up, because I could n't; an' I won't give her up, because I can't; so help me God! Ye may say your worst an' do it; but there 's my say as plain as I can put it."

The young man put his back against the door, folded his arms, and so standing, with his eyes steadily fixed on the wall before him, waited for the words of his fate. Very soon they came, swiftly, wrathfully, gathering force at every sentence. James Hewitt was obliged to his son for his plain speaking, and dutiful conduct, and grateful reward for all that had been done for him. It was always pleasant for a father to find his children thwarting and defying him, and insulting his grey hairs.

"I don't want to defy ye, Sir," said John, and spoke more dutifully than he had yet done; "an' I don't think I 've insulted ye."

"But ye have, Sir," his father went on; "ye

have insulted me, spoke to me like a plough-boy. By God, Sir, for two pins I 'd flog ye!"

John smiled.

"It 's too late for that now," said he; "those days are past."

"Ay! They 're past, ye think," cried the old man; "they 're past, an' so ye defy me. But they 're not past, I tell ye; I 'm master in my own house yet, thank God! an' if I can't strap ye I can sack ye. Ye hear that? I told ye before what I 'd do. I said if ye had any more doin's wi' them Hoeys, if ye did n't keep from their house, if ye did n't renounce the arts o' that little jade, I 'd —"

"She 's no jade, father," said John, quietly. "Even from you I 'll not hear that."

"But ye will hear it, Sir. Ye knew, I told ye myself, that no Hoey 'd ever call himself my friend, that between them an' me there was never, an' never could be, anything but hatred. They 're a pack o' rogues an' liars, one an' all; there never was one o' them yet fit to carry rags to a beggarman. An' yet — yet ye tell me ye 'll marry that jade? Yes, jade! An' ye send her mother to me here to speak for ye —"

"I did n't send her," said John; "I knew nothing of it."

"She came; that 's enough. I want to hear no more. An' now *you* come, an' forgetful o' all I 've done for ye, ye ungrateful scoundrel! ye say ye 'll defy me an' keep on wi' your devices; that ye *will* do what ye like; that ye *will* marry this girl; that ye don't care for what I say. Don't ye? Look ye here, John, here 's a plain word for ye. Are ye or are ye not goin' to do my biddin'?"

"Ye mean give Rachel up?"

"I do."

"No."

"Then out ye go. I disown ye. From this day you 're no son o' mine. Ye hear?"

"I do."

"I 'll curse the day ye were born. I 'll cut ye off wi' a shillin'. Wait!"

The old man rose from his chair, crossed the room, and opening a safe which stood in the corner, took therefrom a folded paper.

"Ye see that?" he cried, and faced his son once more. "Ye see that? It 's my will, an' in it I 've left ye all I possess. Well," and he took the paper between both hands, "here 's

your chance. Take back your word an' it stands; say the word an' I flitter it. Come!"

"Flitter," said John; and the will went fluttering over the floor.

"It 's the last o' ye," shouted James. "Take yourself off! I disown ye. Out o' my sight, an' this house!"

But John stood firm, with his back against the door, and his arms still folded.

"Very well," said he, and the words came slowly as from a tongue striving for calmness. "Very well, I 'll go. An' may neither o' us rue this day. But I 'll say this—"

"Ye 'll say nothin'. My solemn curse on ye. Out ye go!"

John stepped forward.

"But I will speak, father," said he; "for you 're unjust. What have I done? Fell in love wi' a girl. What do I want? Only to marry her. It 's true ye dislike her an' hers. Well, can I help that? I wanted nothin' o' ye, only to be left alone. An' now ye curse me, disown me! Ye might ha' kept your breath to cool your porridge. I 'll leave your house in welcome; an' may your curses come back to—" John stopped suddenly. "No," he

went on; "I 'll not say it; for cursin' is the work o' the devil. But as the word comes so I take it." He held out his hand. "Good-bye."

His father turned away.

"Ye won't shake hands? Come, father; an' may God forgive us."

But the old man said not a word; and the next moment John had turned his back on father and home.

II

John took his coat from a peg in the hall; and without more ado (without a glance, even, through the passage door into the kitchen, where all tearful stood a little bare-footed figure) went out through the front door. He was homeless now and penniless; the wide world was before him. Where should he go? He looked away across the hills, towards the place where dwelt the maid of his heart, the maid for whom he had just forgone so much. Ah, over there was a friend awaiting him, a friend true as steel, whose own true self was worth all else in the world. All else? All else?

His eyes fell on the broad acres lying before him, rich in crop, fat in pasture, dotted with horses and cattle; over there was the orchard, with the sunlight shimmering through the bending branches; close by, just beyond that hedge, was the garden all trim and gay and bountiful; behind, was the old homestead, long, white, comfortably old-fashioned. All that was his inheritance. In sight of it all he had been born and reared; it was his every acre, every stone of it — only for Rachel.

"Is she worth it all? Is she worth it all?" he asked himself, as, turning, he made straight down the lawn, and coming presently to a newly mown meadow, there flung himself on the fresh, cool grass. "Is she worth it all?" he repeated over and over. Yes, yes, his heart answered, she is worth it all, worth the whole world to you, John Hewitt. . . . Was he doing wisely? Would it not have been better to have taken Mary the servant's advice, to have spoken his father fairly, to have thrown himself on his forbearance and forgiveness; at least not so entirely to have ruined his chances? He had acted impulsively, obstinately. Yes, yes; but what other way was there? Wild horses would

not move his father; he hated the Hoeys like poison; you might as well ask tears from a tombstone as forgiveness from James Hewitt. No, no; there was no other way; his bed was made and he must lie on it; for weal or woe the world was before him empty of all but his own self and that little girl over there beyond the hilltops. Ah, but she was everything, everything; a bonnie lass, the pride of his heart. She was everything; let him go seek comfort and consolation at her hands.

With this great yearning for sympathy close at his heart, John, about nightfall, set out across the Gorteen country, and, in a while, came to a thatched farmhouse set low in the hollow of the hills. A garden, enclosed by a painted fence and full (just then in the peaceful gloaming) of the heavy odours of old-fashioned cottage flowers, lay in front; and at the gate, soberly clad in a fresh print gown, stood Rachel. Her face lit up at sound of his step and at sight of his wished-for face; surely a bonnie lass was she, bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked, — a bright vision, you would have said, for any disconsolate lover cast out into the hollow of an empty world.

John quickened his stride along the grass path by the orchard hedge; and with his hands out came soon to the little gate, and his sweetheart standing there waiting for his greeting. Ah, how glad he was to see her, to hear her voice; never before had her face shone out more winsome, or her hand clasped his with a warmer pressure of welcome! His heart was full of a great thankfulness for the gift of her dear presence and love. Ah, it was great, great; worth all the world, that moment there with Rachel in his arms!

Presently he took her hand, led her into the orchard, and there, under the spreading branches of an old apple-tree, sat down beside her.

"Well, Rachy," said he, all suddenly, "it 's come at last."

"What, John?"

"The word to go. Father an' myself had a talk this mornin'. We — we — 'T was an angry scene."

"Oh, John!"

"Ay, Rachy, my girl, the world 's before us. I 've nothin' now in the world but you, *acusbla;* only you, my girl. But it 's enough, is n't it, Rachy? Eh? Is n't it?"

Rachel dropped her eyes and began twisting her ring round her finger.

"Yes, John," answered she, "I suppose so. But you'll tell me about this affair wi' your father? Who — how did it begin?"

Then John, without referring, just then, to the unfortunate visit Mrs. Hoey had paid to his father that day (a visit which, as he well knew, Rachel had neither prompted nor encouraged, but which was simply the well-meant manœuvre of an anxious mother), and without much exaggeration, for John was a modest man, and no artist in the science of words, told his sweetheart the story of his interview with his father, its beginning, progress, disastrous close. "It was to be," said John; "it was to be. I knew surely when Mary — when I set foot inside the parlour and saw his face that it was all over wi' me. It's been comin' for months; did n't I tell him, months back, Rachel, that I would n't give ye up, an' did n't he know the kind o' me? He was only waitin' to see what I'd do. What kind is he at all?"

"Oh, it's all a mistake," cried Rachel; and John, not heeding, went on —

"What kind is he?" asked he, and spread

his hands. "How could he do such a thing? His own flesh an' blood? Turn me out, disown his own son! For what? Because I chose my own wife for myself; because I, a grown man, refused to do his biddin'; because you an' yours were n't to his likin'. An' to curse me — curse me, his own flesh an' blood! Ah, may God repay . . .!"

Rachel caught his arm with both hands.

"No, no, John," cried she. "No, no! I 'm not worth that."

"But ye are," answered John, his wrath suddenly falling, "ye are, *acushla;* worth all in the world. Never heed, my lass, never heed; let the curses go an' all else wi' them. I 've got you, Rachey. Eh, Rachey? I 've got you, an' you 've got me; an' together we 'll face the world. Won't we, deary? Look at me, Rachel; look at me. Ye do care for me?"

Rachel looked up frankly at him.

"Ye need n't ask that, John," said she. "Ye know I 'd go to the ends o' the earth for ye. Only —"

"Only what, Rachel?"

Her eyes fell again.

"Only, ye know, John, I don't like this between you an' your father. It 's wrong."

"Let that go," said John, and took her hand in his. "Let that go; 't was to be. We 'll manage, never fear. I 'll work the hands off me to serve ye. We 'll manage; maybe in a year or two I 'd have more land an' better than what 's gone."

"Oh, it 's not that, John; it 's not that. I don't mind the loss, or what 's before us, or — It 's not that. It 's your being sent away, sent away wi' a curse on ye. It 's this between you an' your father; it 's because I 'm the cause of it all. Oh, it 's wrong, it 's wrong!"

"Ah, whisht, Rachel; whisht! Woman dear, it 's nothin'. Sure ye would n't have me give ye up? Eh? Would ye have me put father an' the land an' the rest all before you? Eh, Rachey?"

"No, no; but it 's wrong, wrong. John, it must n't be; it won't be; sooner than have such a thing on my soul, I 'd go — I 'd go an' never see ye again."

"Never see me again?" repeated John. He caught her face between his two hands, turned it to him and looked straight into her eyes. "What 's all this, Rachel?" he asked.

"I mean it, John."

"Ye mean what?"

"I won't come between you an' your father, John; I won't have ye cursed an' turned out of home. Oh, can't ye see, can't ye see how foolish, an' miserable, an' wicked it all is? Can't ye see how sorry ye would be before long, an' how angry ye'd be wi' me, an' the struggle we'd have, the misery?"

John drew back his hands.

"Ah, that's it," he said, and, as lovers will (particularly your hot-headed kind), quickly changed from sweet to bitter; "that's it! You're afraid to face the world wi' me, afraid o' the struggle an' misery. This is what ye care for me!"

"John," said the girl, "don't be angry wi' me; try to see things as I do. God knows, my heart is sore; but — but there's no other way. Ye know — ye know how I care for ye, more than heaven an' earth. Ye know the sore, sore trial it is to me to have to say this."

"No, I don't," cried John; "I know no such thing. I've given up all for your sake; I come to ye for help an' comfort; an' ye turn from me."

"I don't, I don't. I want ye to do right an'

to do right myself. Oh, surely, surely, John, there 's some other way? Surely in time your father would see, an' forgive me, an' take the curse off ye?"

John jumped up, caught her hands, and pulled her to her feet.

"See here, Rachel," said he; "let 's understand each other. You 've heard what I 've told ye. Ye know father; ye know me; ye know that whatever happens I 'll not lower myself by goin' to him now for forgiveness. Are ye afraid? Or are ye goin' to give me up?"

"I won't do wrong, John."

"Answer! Will ye marry me, or will ye not?"

"John, I can't — I can't!"

John dropped her hands; turned and looked out across the hills — the hills which but a few hours before had shone so hopefully, and which now lay black beneath the hopeless night. Just to think of it! Over there, a lost inheritance; at his back, a faithless, heartless sweetheart; there, under the pitiless sky, himself, homeless and friendless! And this was the end? Good God! He turned and stretched out his arms.

"I give ye one more chance," he cried. "Rachel Hoey, as I am, will ye marry me?"

There came back for answer only a broken sob; and mastered by black anger, John flung the reins to his tongue. This was the end of all. So much for women's word and vows! Oh, but it had long been coming. She never cared for him. She had long wished to give him the go-by. Did he not see it? Who had sent her mother to anger his father and bring things to a climax? Ah, ah! Let her whisht!

"Ye need n't talk," cried John, this angry, foolish John. "I know ye sent her. Ye want me to go. Well, I 'll oblige ye. From this night ye see my face no more. Ye hear that? An' *you* 've done it, Rachel Hoey, mind ye. Of your own will ye 've done it. Ah, the fool I was to trust your false, fickle face! May God forgive ye; may God forgive ye!"

And with that John turned, and closing his ears to the pitiful cry which came to him from the lover's seat beneath the old apple-tree: "Oh, John, John, come back, come back!" went out wrathfully into the night.

III.

For long, in that night of misfortune, John wandered aimlessly through the silent fields; now cursing his fate, now muttering dark vows of vengeance, now, as the monstrous demon of his anger tore at his breast, shouting fiercely and shaking his clenched hands at the solemn stars; at last, near the time of dawn, found himself in the yard of his father's house.

For a moment his anger went. How came he there? he thought. He had no right now to a stone beneath his shoe in that yard; what devil of torture had led his feet thither? With an oath, he turned and slowly went down the lane towards the road; then, at the gate, remembering that at least he had a right to his own, wheeled suddenly back, boldly crossed the yard, and lifted the latch of the kitchen door.

Much to his surprise the door yielded. Very cautiously (for all his angry boldness) John stepped on tip-toe into the kitchen. Not a sound was there; not a sound as he opened the passage door and slipped up the stairs. Oh, home of John Hewitt's childhood, thus to have

him enter you and, like a thief, go slinking for his own! You were born there, John; there your mother died; there your father sleeps, whose face you have vowed nevermore to see: through the long days of your youth and early manhood it sheltered you: now, like a thief, you glide through it, and only that little despised Mary up in her bare attic has ear or care for you! And it is all for the sake of a maiden — a maiden who has turned from you, my poor angry outcast!

Once in his room, John quickly changed his clothes, took his little store of money from a drawer, and noiselessly (for all his anger and bravery) started downstairs. On the landing he passed his father's door. It was open, and he peeped in. The dawn had come, pale and ghostly; there by the wall his father lay asleep. He could see the old white head; the texts on the wall; the open Bible on the dressing-table, with the spectacles lying across the leaves; the shelf above the bed, with its scanty stock of books and long rows of medicine bottles.

The demon plunged in John's breast. How could his father sleep there so calmly and his own son an outcast in the world, a friendless,

angry outcast, obliged to sneak like a thief in search of his own? Oh, it was damnable! On tip-toe John entered. Black anger was on his soul. The demon was shouting Vengeance. There, there snug and asleep, lay the cause of all his trouble. *Vengeance, vengeance!* cried the Demon; *now, now is your time. A sudden blow, a sudden swift* . . .

The first ray of sunlight shot across the dark counterpane, and turned to the colour of blood there before the young man's eyes. Blood! *Murder!* The word was blazoned all round the room. His hands flashed red before his face. With a cry as of a stricken animal, he turned swiftly, ran down, and out of the house.

And soon after, a little black figure also went out and followed in his footsteps.

Hardly knowing whither he went, and not much caring, John made across the fields, and before long struck the Bunn road. The sun was risen; its strong, fresh rays smote him with utter weariness; presently, he broke through a hedge, stretched himself in the shade of a haycock, and soon was fast asleep. And close by, that little figure in black watched and waited.

About mid-day John woke, sat awhile in deep thought (thinking, no doubt, though as yet with no very lively horror, of that horrible temptation which but a few hours before had come to him); at last rose, and once more took to the road. He was hungry and weary; the day was bright and gracious, but left him spiritless; in his breast anger was already nigh dispossession before the stress of a fine spirit of recklessness. An hour or two brought him to Bunn town, climbing white and straggling up from the tumbling river; and there quickly he sought meat and drink.

At that time a disastrous war was draining these islands of its manhood; and through most of our towns (through those, at all events, which, like Bunn, boasted a barracks among its public buildings) recruiting sergeants stalked proudly in scarlet and ribbons. That day, the quick eye of the Bunn sergeant, as he sat in the bar-parlour of the Diamond Hotel, winding his silver tongue into the dull ear of some hillside yokel, fell upon our outcast sitting forlorn over his meal in the corner. Here was his man, thought he; soon, having hooked his innocent, he was busy spreading the roll of glory before

the listless eyes of John. Ah, the army was the place for your strong, clever fellow, your well-educated, handsome, big fellow; nowhere was promotion quicker or surer, particularly then in times of war; the life was noble, healthy; the girls ran wild after you.

"I say, sergeant," John broke in; "leave the girls alone, my son; ye 'll not tempt me wi' them. Damn them! say I."

The sergeant looked hard at John; then smiled knowingly to himself, called for more drink, and went on with his skilful tappings on the drum of Glory. Ah, the sport soldiers had, the free and easy life; no cares, no troubles, plenty of food and drink, plenty of devilment; and, at the end, a glorious return to friends and home.

"Never mind that either, sergeant," said John. "There 's no home for me now, nor friends. I 'm done wi' them, damn them one an' all! Divil cares! Out wi' your shillin', my son, an' pass the liquor."

So John took the shilling; and at sight of it lying bright in his palm, an idea came to him, a brilliant idea, he was sure (as, indeed, it was bound to be, being born of anger and reckless-

ness and the fumes of recruiting whisky); one which made him slap his leg, and laugh loud, and vow with an oath that the army was soon to receive a thundering comical dog.

"Easy a while, sergeant," said he; "take another glass till I write a scrape. Hi, there! More drink, an' that paper an' ink as fast as ye can. Now easy, my son, easy; I 'll not be a tick, for the words are on the tip o' my tongue. Whisht now, an' don't spoil sport," said John, as, spreading his elbows and calling to his face a smile of supreme satisfaction, he began a letter; presently finished it, and with the shilling enclosed it in an envelope.

"Now, sergeant," said he, as with a great flourish he finished the address on the cover; "now, my son, I 'm ready. Ye see that letter? Well, that 's the finest joke I ever made, the very finest." (God forgive him, how often, afterwards, when lying weary and home-sick under foreign skies, did he think with wondering shame of that heartless joke.) "Boys, when that comes to the right place it 'll make the man dance wi' rage. Och, och, but Irishmen are the play-boys, full o' fun they are. Look here, sergeant; this mornin' at daybreak — But no matter, *that* 's

all gone. I don't care a bucky now for all the fathers in Ireland! No more drink? Come on! Well, well, then; off we go — off for death or glory."

So the two swaggered out: and half-way down Main Street, just as John was turning into the post office, a little figure in black ran from a shop door and caught John by the arm.

"Aw, Sir, Sir," cried Mary, the servant; "ye have n't done it? Ye have n't 'listed? Och, don't say it! It 'll brek me — me — Och, no!"

The sergeant laughed knowingly and turned away; he was used to scenes like that.

"Ay, Mary," answered John; I 'm off — off to the wars, my girl. The morrow or next day 'll see me in scarlet red. But what brings you here, Mary?"

Mary 's eyes fell.

"Ah," said she, "I — I — Master sent me a message. Ah, no, Sir," she went on hurriedly; "ah, no; don't leave us; don't, Sir. The master 'll forgive ye. Come back, Sir. Ah do, for God's sake!"

John laughed down at the serious little face.

"No, no," said he, "there 's no forgiveness for me now, an' I want none. Good-bye, Mary,

an' — Look here, take this letter to father. Just give it him an' say nothin'. Good-bye, Mary; safe home, an' God be with ye!"

"Ah, no, no, Sir! Ah, no, no! I can't bear it. Ah, God ha' mercy! He 's gone, he 's gone, an' niver, niver will I see his face again! Ah; Mister John, Mister John, come back to me, come back!"

But John went on gloriously up Barrack Hill.

Some time that same day, a tax-cart, driven by an old man, as it turned off into the Bunn road, was met by a young girl. Quickly she stepped from the side-path and snatched at the reins.

"Mr. Hewitt," said she, "is John at home?"

The old man looked down into the girl's pitiful face, all pale and worn with weeping. So this was John's sweetheart; this was the lass who had made him curse John, and disown him, and turn him from home. A bonnie lass she was, a bonnie — But John, where was John?

"No, my lass," answered he, "he 's not at home. But you — surely you —?"

"No, no," cried Rachel; "he left me last night, left me in anger. He said he'd never — Oh, Sir, where is he?"

The old man took his eyes from Rachel's

face and looked slowly across the sun-lit fields. Was he too late? he asked himself. Was his repentance too late? Was God now punishing him for his hardness and anger? Was John gone? Ah, that dream which had come to him at dawn that morning! His mind was full of it. For the hundredth time that morning, he saw again that pleading figure stand by his bed-foot, stretch out its hands imploringly, then turn from him, and with a great cry hurry from the room. And he had lain there in his obstinacy, nor moved a finger at the bidding of a righteous God! And now—?

He looked again at Rachel.

"God knows, my lass," said he. "God knows where John is. But come; jump up, maybe we 'd both find him."

So these two, John's father and his sweetheart, drove on together towards Bunn; and half-way there, Mary the servant stopped them, and delivered John's letter.

Very deliberately—for there was something like dread on his heart—the old man put down the reins and tore open the envelope. A coin dropped out, jingled on the bottom of the cart, rolled out upon the road, and was picked up by

Mary the servant. Slowly the old man read the letter; then, without a word, handed it to Rachel.

Dear Sir, — she read, — *Before you kicked me out of your house you swore to cut me off with a shilling. As I am sure you would begrudge me even that, and as I have no wish to be beholden to you for anything, I herewith enclose twelve pence sterling, being the amount which you have decided to leave me under the terms of your new will. I may add that the money has just been handed to me by one James Brown, recruiting sergeant of one of Her Majesty's Regiments of Foot. No receipt is necessary.*

Yours, JOHN HEWITT.

P. S. — You will never see my face again.

"Never see his face again?" cried Rachel. "Never!"

"Niver see him again?" cried Mary the servant, and clutched her shilling hard. "Is that what Mister John says? Aw, dear Lord, dear Lord!"

The old man picked up the reins and turned for home.

"Never see him again?" said he, as if to himself. "Never see his face again?"

And they never did; for in the wars John's portion was not glory.

The Emigrant.

The Emigrant.

SHE leant out of the carriage window and saw the van-door close; then called to the porter if her box were safe and sound.

"Aw, ay," said he, and slouched up, wiping the wet from his hand on his corduroys; "aw, ay; it 'll follow ye safe to Clogheen, anyhow. Good-bye, an' God speed ye!"

"Good-bye," she said, and gave him her hand. "But are n't the rest o' ye comin'?" she called.

The station-master came and gave her a parting word; then two or three town loiterers; then the station-master's wife, with a shawl over her head, and picking her way through the puddles; last of all came a man — the girl's father, one could see — running stiffly, and glancing back often at the horse and cart standing forlorn outside the gate.

"Good-bye, Mary," he said, "an' God be with ye, me girl." He held her hand for a second or two and his lips kept moving whilst she answered bravely. "Ye 'ill write from New York?"

"I will — aw, at once."

"Do — don't keep us waitin'," he said; then stood back with the others, and blinked at the driving rain. She pulled a handkerchief from a battered brown hand-bag, and nervously wiped her lips.

"Ah," called she, "ye all thought yes 'd see me cryin'. Ah, I tricked ye rightly."

"Ah, no," answered the porter; "we knew ye 'd be brave."

"Ay, ay," assented the rest, and shifted their legs; "ay, ay."

"Away ye go," shouted the guard; the engine shrieked; Mary shook out her handkerchief and called good-bye; her friends waved an arm; she had started for the States.

"They thought I 'd cry," said she, as she sat back and fell to plucking at the fingers of her woollen gloves. "They thought I'd cry — och, no!"

She was brave; yet her lips were quivering, and her eyes were turned mournfully on the fields

and hedges and the cottages here and there shining white through the grey drift of the rain.

"We 'll soon be at it," she said presently. "Ah, Lord, the day it is! An' the state I 'm in; och, och." She stooped and wrung the water from her bedraggled skirt. "An' me hair that tattered; aw, it 's shockin'! But I did n't cry," she said, and flashed her black eyes at me. "Och, no. Whisht! we 're gettin' near it. Aw, there it is; there they are! Good-bye, *muther!* Good-bye, *Patsey*, an' *Johnny*, an' *Lizzie!* Good-bye *all!*"

I stood up, and over her hat caught a glimpse of the group gathered on the street before the cottage: the mother in her night-cap, the children bare-legged, all waving their arms and caps, and crying their farewells.

"Good-bye," cried Mary back through the rain; "och, good-bye!"

That was the last of them she would see, she said, as she sat down again, the last, till the Lord knew when. She was for the States? asked some one. Ah, she was; she could get work there; she could do nothing at home. Sure, it was better to go than to be a burden on them all. Ah, yes; she had been out before

an' had come home to settle, but — but, and her handkerchief went fast to her lips — well, things had turned out troublesome. She 'd do better out there ; there were too many at home, and her mother was poorly. Ah, an', sure, times were shockin' bad.

"Ay, ay," the men went in chorus ; "they are, they are ;" then looked mournfully at her red cheeks, and from one to another passed the word that she was a brave girl, so she was ; a brave girl ; and God speed her, said they, as one by one they went out clumsily at Glann station, and left Mary and me together.

It was fair-day at Glann ; therefore did the train settle itself by the platform for a long rest.

"The guard mebbe 's gone to see the fair," said Mary ; and I laughed, stamped vigorously (for it was cold) across the carriage floor, wiped the window, and looked out.

Down the further bank of the railway, along a narrow path which had started beyond the fields somewhere near the town, was coming a little procession of six men, bearing a coffin on a rough hurdle made of ash poles. The men were bare-headed ; a single bunch of wild-flowers lay atop the streaming coffin ; there were no

mourners, nor anywhere could one see any sign of sorrow or curiosity. They came on down, the men with their pitiful burden, crossed a track, came to a siding, slid the coffin into a fish-van, shut the door, pulled their soft felt hats from their pockets, mopped their faces, then took shelter behind the van and lit their pipes. There wanted only a bottle to make the scene complete, and I was confidently watching for it, when right at my elbow arose a great sobbing.

"Aw, aw," cried Mary; "did ye see? Did ye see? Och! what a way to be tr'ated! An' such a day for a buryin'! All out in the wet — the wet an' the cowld. Aw, poor crature! Aw, muther, muther, ye 'll die, ye 'ill die! I 'll niver see ye again, nor father, nor no one. Aw, it's cruel to lave ye. I 'll go back; I 'll go back!"

Her sobs were pitiful. Loiterers began to gather round the door. It was only a poor girl going to America, I explained; they would pity her, I was sure. Ah, they would, said they, and went, all but one: a big, sunburnt fellow dressed in rough tweed, who came forward and asked my leave. For what? Ah, he knew the girl; came in, went over and laid a rough hand on Mary's shoulder.

"Ah, don't," she said. "I'll go home, I 'll go home."

"What ails ye, Mary, at all?" said he, and shook her again.

She turned.

"Ah, God A'mighty, James!" she cried; and her tears went. It's you? Where are ye goin'? What brings ye? Who towld ye?"

James sat down heavily, and began beating his boot with his stick. Ah, he 'd been to the fair, had sold early, was waiting for a train to take him home.

"Where are ye goin'?" he said over his shoulder. "What wur ye bleartin' about?"

Mary hung her head and did not answer.

"Where are ye goin'?" he said again.

She looked up at him quickly, almost defiantly.

"To the States."

He nodded; began again the tattoo on his boot, and before another word came the train had started.

"We're goin'," said Mary. "Hurry an' say good-bye, or they'll shut ye in."

"No matter," he answered; "I'll stay where I am."

The maid sat apart from the man, and answered his abrupt, mannerless questions as bravely as she might.

Why was she going? Ah, he knew; there was no need to ask.

Why had she not told him? Better not; what was the use? All was over between them.

The man eyed her wonderingly. Over? he repeated. Over? Did she not know he was ready to make it up, and — to do his best? Ay, yes, she knew; still —

Still, what? It was better to go, she said, and looked tearfully out at the flying fields.

Yes, it was better to go; I agreed with Mary. He was a lout, for certain; a good-for-nothing, by all chance. She would lose nothing by leaving him. There, there, sitting beside her, was the trouble about which she had spoken. She had come home to settle down with him; but things had been troublesome. Ah, yes. One knew it all. He had been easy-going and lazy; wanted things to turn up, felt no inclination to hurry into married cares. Aw, sure, he could wait awhile; and if he, then Mary. Something like that it had been; anyhow, Mary had not settled. They had quarrelled, and now

she was leaving him for better or worse. She was wise. Had the man no bowels? Had he nothing for her but hard questions and pitying looks? Would he not, before he went, say one kind word to this girl who had trusted in his word and manhood, and finding them wanting was now leaving him for ever? Did there not some golden memory linger about his heart? Not one. He was wooden to the core. He would sit on there, tapping his boot and staring at his big freckled hands, neither hurt nor sorry, but just wondering that a girl could be such a fool; the train would stop, and with a nod and a flabby shake of the hand, he would take himself out into the rain. And good riddance!

The train slowed; Mary's lips began to quiver. The train stopped; I gathered in my legs, so that the fellow might pass without touching me. He raised his head and looked out at the sky.

"Ah, I may as well g' wan to the junction," he drawled; "it'll be all the same; one could do nothin' such a day, anyhow."

"Yis," said Mary, and not cheerlessly. "Sure, ye may as well."

We sat silent all the way to Clogheen, and

there we parted: Mary, so it was set down, to catch a train North, James one back home, and I to do my work in the town.

Two hours afterwards I met the two in the rain-swept streets, and in my surprise stopped short before them. Mary looked up and laughed.

"Ah," said she, "I 'm here yit; that train went without me."

"Oh," said I; "that 's very bad; why, the next won't be here for hours. And you 're drenched? But — but — " and I looked at James as he stood, slightly flushed and dripping wet, blankly staring across the street.

"Ah, yis," Mary answered. "James missed his, too; I 'm not goin' at all; sure, we 've made it up."

I put my watch slowly back into my pocket and nodded. "James has promised me," she went on, and her eyes fell; "an' we 're goin' to get marr'ed come harvest-time; an' he 'll try hard for a place at the big house above. An' — an' — God knows, Sir, I 'm not sorry, for me heart was sore at lavin' home."

They knew their own business best; but there fell an awkward silence, so I asked James con-

cerning his prospects. Did he see his way clearly?

Ah, he did; and began tapping his boots. Sure, there was always a way if one could only wait till it came. "Is n't she better here, anyway, whatever comes," said he, and gave me a moment's glimpse at his face, "than out yonder wid the strangers? Sure, 't was madness av her to think o' it; sure, Providence sent me to Glann fair."

Providence? And had Providence sent also that dismal procession to the fish-van, that Mary might see it and sob for her friends, and her James, and the home of her heart?

"And you, Mary?" I asked. "Are *you* quite satisfied?"

"Ah, yis," said she mournfully. "Ah, I hope so."

I took her into a shop and bought her a little wedding gift — a silver brooch, shaped like a harp and set with green marble, then wished them more happiness than I ever hoped they would have, and went my way.

Three hours afterwards saw me at Clogheen station again, and there was Mary, standing dejected by her little yellow box.

"Not gone home yet, Mary?" I asked.

Her handkerchief fluttered out.

"No-o, Sir. I — was lookin' for ye. I — I wanted to give ye back this;" and she held out the brooch. "I 'll niver wear it. Och, it 's all over. I — I 'm goin' on to catch the ship."

It was well. I determined that this time neither Providence nor emotion should hinder her going.

"Ah, no," she sobbed; "'t was only foolishness. Me heart was sore at lavin' them all; an' the sight o' that coffin an' James comin' like that — Och, I cud n't bear it! But 't was foolish av me; it 's better for me to go."

I took the brooch, pinned it on her jacket, and spoke a foolish word or two by way of comfort. She would, I hoped, wear it for my sake, if not for . . .

"Aw, Sir," she burst out, "if he 'd only been *steady!* for I liked him well. Och, och!"

She turned and looked down the platform; there sat James, drunk and asleep.

A Beggar's Benefit.

A Beggar's Benefit.

ALL day long Phelim had piped enticingly from the sidewalks and longingly from the thresholds of the citizens; and now, the fair being over, and people thinking of home, Phelim had pocketed his tin whistle and, in the market-place before Lismahee town-hall, stood within a ring of admirers preparing to give his farewell performance.

"Gather up, gather up, me sons an' daughters," he shouted, and shook himself inside his rags. "Come and hear ould Phelim for the last time for a whole month. Come, childer, come. Gather up, gather up. Is *jaynius* to whistle to the winds an' die for lack of bread? Aw, pity the poor blind," he whined with a sudden change of tone. "Och, pity the poor blind. Long I've travelled, hard I've

wrought this day. Up to heaven I cry: *Och, pity the poor blind!*"

The wheedling whine of him, so humorously pitiful, came shrill through the street; at sound of it, you could see men's hands go quick to their pockets, and themselves press through the crowd to get a nearer look at the old beggar standing there blind and helpless within the ring, crying shrilly up to heaven for pity for the poor blind.

"Pity poor ould Phelim," he cried; and placing his hands atop his staff waited eagerly for his appeal to bring the pence rattling into the battered hat that rested before him on the stones.

A fine head he had (he was a schoolmaster once in the days before blindness and beggary) and strong regular features; his long yellow-white hair streamed back from his brow and fell curling on his drooping shoulders; a tattered frieze coat (caught at the waist with a cord) hung round him almost to his feet, and part covered a dog which lay on the stones, its head resting across Phelim's shoes.

"Pity poor ould Phelim," he wailed; then suddenly found his natural voice. "I don't

hear them coppers tumblin' in," he said sharply to those around him. "How many hours longer are ye goin' to keep me, when a penny among six o' ye'd start me? Come, boys, be Irishmen. Sure the blood o' ye *loathes* meanness. Rattle them in, me sons. *That's right.* Never heed the ould beaver; like meself it'll stand a power o' batterin' from money. I wish to glory it was full o' bank notes. It's meself 'd scatter ribs o' beef among ye an' stand for the county next election. *Did* I hear a penny fallin' then? Or was it only a jingle in some miser's pocket? Come, lads, come. That's right. *One more?* Hurroo. *Another?* Heart o' mine, it's rainin' them now. What," and Phelim turned his face towards the sky, "is the shower over? Well, well. *Och, pity the poor blind!*" he whined as he stooped and groped for his hat; lifted it, and coin by coin counted his takings into a dirty wallet.

"Whisht," he would say as the coppers dropped; "there goes another, makin' *fifteen* o' them — all ha'pence, as me father was a king! *Sixteen*, as I'm a sinner! Wonder's 'll niver cease. *Nineteen.* Will there be *twenty?* Och, will there be twenty? Wait. Aw, there is,

there is. *Twenty-three.* Will there be two shillin's or will there not? *Two shillin's* did I say? Och, I forget; an' them all ha'pence. Ah, childer dear, Irelan's gone to pot. Only *twenty-nine* this blessed day. *Twenty-nine* ha'pence from such a crowd! Och, och. An' on such a day, wi' the sun pourin' down on me poor ould skull. Well, childer, dear forgive ye; an' in case the stony hearts o' any o' ye wid chance to melt, there 's the ould caubeen on the stones again ready for all it 'll get. *Aw, pity the poor blind!*" he whined again as he stooped and set the hat beside the dog; then straightened himself and raised his face.

"Stand back from me there," cried Phelim, and swung his staff round the ring. "Crowd back an' give me elbow room. Where am I? Am I in the middle o' the ring? I am. Well, am I straight under the town clock? I am. An' tell me, is the purtiest girl in Lismahee right afore me? Och, is she? Now don't laugh. Are ye there, *Mavourneen?* Well, in the light o' your blessed eyes, ould Phelim 'll sing ye a song — not av love an' beauty, aw, no — jist a wee trifle about meself, out o' me own head. Are ye listenin', *Mavourneen?* Well,

now then." And stretching his hands and plucking at imaginary harp-strings, Phelim sang: —

"It 's meself is an Irish bard, a pote wild an' free;
I drive my winged Pegaysus hard, an' its flight I accompany
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!

"Will ye whisht till I touch the strings! Keep still as I sing my lay!
Hish, shish, to the sound o' my muse's wings keepin' time to the swing an' sway
Of my harp, *tow-row*, of my harp!

"I sing of trouble an' of joy: when me spirit 's sad I moan:
When times are good I 'm a joyous boy: in the house of the dead I groan —
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!

"Sometimes on a ditch I sit an' thrum to the passers-by:
When the coppers come I 'm full o' wit, but I 'm sad when they don't, an' sigh —
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!

"Now an' then to a weddin' spree, near to supper-time, I run,
An' sing an' play to the company — an' pass round the hat when I 'm done —
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!

"An then at election times I 'm a *patriot* fierce an' true;
I stir men up wid fiery rhymes (sure, I 'm paid for doin' it, too!) —
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!

"I perform at markets, an' fairs, at dances, too, an' wakes;
I 'm known by my brow an' flowin' hairs; an' my voice is grand at shakes —
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!

"So here an' there I roam; up an' down I play an' sing:
Wid the grass for bed an' the world my home, of the minstrel boys I 'm king —
Wid my harp, *tow-row*, wid my harp!"

"Good man, Phelim," cried the ring, as the old man finished, and, crossing his hands atop his staff, waited for the applause. "Good man, Phelim. Bully boy. Well sung, me son." "Another," skirled the ring; "give us another. Give us *Connie Roe*."

Phelim raised his staff.

"Silence," he called. "Silence! Don't be tellin' me what I 'm to give ye. Ye 'll get just what ye 've paid for."

"*Connie Roe*," went the voices again; "give us *Connie Roe*."

"*Will* ye whisht there?" roared Phelim. "Another cheep from ye an' I 'll shake me feet at ye all. *Connie Roe*, indeed! *Connie Roe* for nine an' twenty ha'pence! Who wants *Connie Roe?*"

"Ivery one," came the roar.

"Then," said Phelim, and pointed down at his old beaver, "rattle in a few more o' the brown boys; make them *forty* all told, an' I start. Come, who 's first? Quick now. *Ho, ho*, there they go; pepper the ould caubeen, childer. Keep at it, boys — one after another, like Paddy's ducks. *Och, pity the poor blind!* That 's the way. *Hurroo.* Make it fifty an' I 'll shout meself hoarse. What! All done? Well, well," he moaned and stooped for the beaver; "dear send I may die in a ditch an' niver see the workhouse. Sure me *jaynius* won't save me. *Will* what 's there make the number, I wonder?" he said, as he groped among the coins and dropped them through his fingers. "I misdoubt; but no odds; I 'll trust ye, childer, I 'll trust ye."

Very skilfully he poured the coins into his

wallet, then drew himself up, ran his fingers through his hair, and in a measured sing-song (intoning you might say) began:

"The sorry word flew round the country side that poor ould Connie Roe was dead and gone, dead and gone — gone home. Big wi' years was she — *peace to her soul!* — wi' years o' poverty, an' care an' woe. *Light lie her bones!* All through the weary years she passed as one whose tongue dropped wisdom, whose life was pure, whose hand was ever stretched to give, when givin' meant the stintin' of herself. Her end was peace. Kind willin' hands were by to soothe her passin' an' send her softly on her way. *Peace to her soul!*"

The old man bowed his head for a moment in the silence of the market-place; then quicker, less doleful, the chant went on:

"An' now her neighbours come wi' willin' feet, to sit an' smoke, an' sing sad songs; to wail, an' howl, an' glorify the dead wi' hideous mockery of the awe of death. I see them now. There in the mud-walled room — its rafters bright wi' smoke, the floor of clay, the single window small an' dark, the gloom an' smoke blindin' as sleep — there on chairs,

on stools, on sods of turf, sit men an' women, old and young, now speakin' tender o' the dead, now laughin' wild an' free, now hushed an' still as from ould hags, wi' faces wrung wi' grief, their withered arms stretched out to heaven, goes up the fearful shriekin' wail — a wail like spirits cryin' through the night, a wail that thrills wi' dread one's very flesh an' makes the blood run cold.

"And in the middle o' the room is set a wooden bier. All plain and rude it is — the portion of the poor. The hurdles stand; rough wood lies loose on top, rough wood below; above, the candles feebly burn; see how they flare an' gutter in the smoke, an' throw their glimmer through the flickerin' gloom on throngs of livin' ghosts! See how the weird light falls on shinin' tins all sparklin' round the walls. The kettle hisses there; the fire jumps and falls, jumps an' falls — ah, jumps an' shows that gruesome thing stretched out between the candles an' the floor — a thing all shrouded up, all stark an' grim. Ah, God, that senseless shape, that poor ould face so calmly restin' there an' peepin' up so still an' cold — so cold. Whisht, the fire falls. Back, back thou gruesome thing!

Whisht, comes once more the merry laugh, the sharp debate, the horrid wail. See, there again, the heedless groups that give no thought to life or death e'en in the haunt of Death."

The old man paused; the ring pressed closer; silence held the market-place; quicker the chant went on:

"The wake was nearly done; the pipes were out, the talk grown flat an' dull, the courtin' pairs at last well sick of love; ould men were fast asleep, the young a-noddin' as they sat; no more the hags gave up their wail, but wagged their hairy chins in senseless talk.

"The wake was done; and yet none liked to go, for out of doors the night was dark and wild. At last one rose, and kicking o'er his stool, cried out, '*Here goes!*' then started for the door; but goin', stumbled, slipped, and wi' a helpless crash fell on the bier. The candles fell; up rose the dead; quick, like a flash, the shroud and head-dress blazed — blazed up, flared out, and showed to all a shape that sprang like life, all wrapped in flame — sprang up, then fell and rolled out on the floor. And all were sure that Connie Roe had come to life to warn them of their sins."

Quicker, sharper, went the old man's voice:

"Then came a scene. A panic seized them all. With shrieks, an' yells, an' curses fierce an' loud, half blind wi' fear, half mad wi' dread, the wake made for the door. Look, there they go. Like beasts they go — brute beasts — and trample other down. The door is shut, fast shut. Hear now, the cries of fear turn quick to yells of pain. Back, back, ye men; ye cowards back an' let the women go! Oh, craven hearts; oh, coward hearts; is this your Irish blood? See, how they fight an' moil like tigers in a den. Man strives with man and man with maid; now friend is foe and strength is right. Quick, cravens, quick; that thing is there behind. Quick, cravens, quick! One frantic rush. There, there; the wall goes down; the beasts are free. . . . Let then the flames mount high and give dead Connie Roe a martyr's burial. . . . Ah, God, not yet! Back, cravens, back! The roof is down, is all ablaze. Hear there that shriek. It comes from one, a young fair girl, fast prisoned in that blazing tomb. Back, back, ye men, and set the living free!

"What! Gone? All gone? Oh, hearts of straw!

"Blow then, ye winds, blow hard and lick the flames; blow hard, and ere the morn strew far and wide the ashes of those two — the woman old, and her, the maiden fair, whom cowards left to die.

"*Peace to their souls!*"

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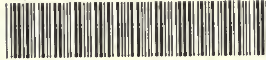
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RING O' RUSHES

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