

# **The Hedge School; The Midnight Mass; The Donagh eBook**

## **The Hedge School; The Midnight Mass; The Donagh by William Carleton**

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# Page 1

## THE HEDGE SCHOOL.

There never was a more unfounded calumny, than that which would impute to the Irish peasantry an indifference to education. I may, on the contrary, fearlessly assert that the lower orders of no country ever manifested such a positive inclination for literary acquirements, and that, too, under circumstances strongly calculated to produce carelessness and apathy on this particular subject. Nay, I do maintain, that he who is intimately acquainted with the character of our countrymen, must acknowledge that their zeal for book learning, not only is strong and ardent, when opportunities of scholastic education occur, but that it increases in proportion as these opportunities are rare and unattainable. The very name and nature of Hedge Schools are proof of this; for what stronger point could be made out, in illustration of my position, than the fact, that, despite of obstacles, the very idea of which would crush ordinary enterprise—when not even a shed could be obtained in which to assemble the children of an Irish village, the worthy pedagogue selected the first green spot on the sunny side of a quickset-thorn hedge, which he conceived adapted for his purpose, and there, under the scorching rays of a summer sun, and in defiance of spies and statutes, carried on the work of instruction. From this circumstance the name of Hedge School originated; and, however it may be associated with the ludicrous, I maintain, that it is highly creditable to the character of the people, and an encouragement to those who wish to see them receive pure and correct educational knowledge. A Hedge School, however, in its original sense, was but a temporary establishment, being only adopted until such a school-house could be erected, as it was in those days deemed sufficient to hold such a number of children, as were expected, at all hazards, to attend it.

The opinion, I know, which has been long entertained of Hedge Schoolmasters, was, and still is, unfavorable; but the character of these worthy and eccentric persons has been misunderstood, for the stigma attached to their want of knowledge should have rather been applied to their want of morals, because, on this latter point, were they principally indefensible. The fact is, that Hedge Schoolmasters were a class of men from whom morality was not expected by the peasantry; for, strange to say, one of their strongest recommendations to the good opinion of the People, as far as their literary talents and qualifications were concerned, was an inordinate love of whiskey, and if to this could be added a slight touch of derangement, the character was complete.

On once asking an Irish peasant, why he sent his children to a schoolmaster who was notoriously addicted to spirituous liquors, rather than to a man of sober habits who taught in the same neighborhood,

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“Why do I send them to Mat Meegan, is it?” he replied—“and do you think, sir,” said he, “that I’d send them to that dry-headed dunce, Mr. Frazher, with his black coat upon him, and his Caroline hat, and him wouldn’t take a glass of poteen wanst in seven years? Mat, sir, likes it, and teaches the boys ten times bettther whin he’s dhrunk nor when he’s sober; and you’ll never find a good tacher, sir, but’s fond of it. As for Mat, when he’s half gone, I’d turn him agin the country for deepness in learning; for it’s then he rhymes it out of him, that it would do one good to hear him.”

“So,” said I, “you think that a love of drinking poteen is a sign of talent in a school-master?”

“Ay, or in any man else, sir,” he replied. “Look at tradesmen, and ’tis always the cleverest that you’ll find fond of the drink! If you had hard Mat and Frazher, the other evening, at it—what a hare Mat made of him! but he was just in proper tune for it, being, at the time, purty well I thank you, and did not lave him a leg to stand upon. He took him in Euclid’s Ailments and Logicals, and proved in Frazher’s teeth that the candlestick before them was the church-steeple, and Frazher himself the parson; and so sign was on it, the other couldn’t disprove it, but had to give in.”

“Mat, then,” I observed, “is the most learned man on this walk.”

“Why, thin, I doubt that same, sir,” replied he, “for all he’s so great in the books; for, you see, while they were ding dust at it, who comes in but mad Delaney, and he attacked Mat, and, in less than no time, rubbed the consate out of him, as clane as he did out of Frazher.”

“Who is Delaney?” I inquired.

“He was the makings of a priest, sir, and was in Maynooth a couple of years, but he took in the knowledge so fast, that, bedad, he got cracked wid larnin’—for a dunce you see, never cracks wid it, in regard of the thickness of the skull: no doubt but he’s too many for Mat, and can go far beyant him in the books; but then, like Mat, he’s still brightest whin he has a sup in his head.”

These are the prejudices which the Irish peasantry have long entertained concerning the character of hedge schoolmasters; but, granting them to be unfounded, as they generally are, yet it is an indisputable fact, that hedge schoolmasters were as superior in literary knowledge and acquirements to the class of men who are now engaged in the general education of the people, as they were beneath them in moral and religious character. The former part of this assertion will, I am aware, appear rather startling to many. But it is true; and one great cause why the character of Society Teachers is undervalued, in many instances, by the people, proceeds from a conviction on their parts, that they are, and must be, incapable, from the slender portion of learning they have received, of giving their children a sound and practical education.

But that we may put this subject in a clearer light, we will give a sketch of the course of instruction which was deemed necessary for a hedge schoolmaster, and let it be contrasted with that which falls to the lot of those engaged in the conducting of schools patronized by the Education Societies of the present day.

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When a poor man, about twenty or thirty years ago, understood from the schoolmaster who educated his sons, that any of them was particularly “cute at his larnin’,” the ambition of the parent usually directed itself to one of three objects—he would either make him a priest, a clerk, or a schoolmaster. The determination once fixed, the boy was set apart from every kind of labor, that he might be at liberty to bestow his undivided time and talents to the object set before him. His parents strained every nerve to furnish him with the necessary books, and always took care that his appearance and dress should be more decent than those of any other member of the family. If the church were in prospect, he was distinguished, after he had been two or three years at his Latin, by the appellation of “the young priest,” an epithet to him of the greatest pride and honor; but if destined only to wield the ferula, his importance in the family, and the narrow circle of his friends, was by no means so great. If, however, the goal of his future ambition as a schoolmaster was humbler, that of his literary career was considerably extended. He usually remained at the next school in the vicinity until he supposed that he had completely drained the master of all his knowledge. This circumstance was generally discovered in the following manner:—As soon as he judged himself a match for his teacher, and possessed sufficient confidence in his own powers, he penned him a formal challenge to meet him in literary contest either in his own school, before competent witnesses, or at the chapel-green, on the Sabbath day, before the arrival of the priest or probably after it—for the priest himself was sometimes the moderator and judge upon these occasions. This challenge was generally couched in rhyme, and either sent by the hands of a common friend or posted upon the chapel-door.

These contests, as the reader perceives, were always public, and were witnessed by the peasantry with intense interest. If the master sustained a defeat, it was not so much attributed to his want of learning, as to the overwhelming talent of his opponent; nor was the success of the pupil generally followed by the expulsion of the master—for this was but the first of a series of challenges which the former proposed to undertake, ere he eventually settled himself in the exercise of his profession.

I remember being present at one of them, and a ludicrous exhibition it was. The parish priest, a red-faced, jocular little man, was president; and his curate, a scholar of six feet two inches in height, and a schoolmaster from the next parish, were judges. I will only touch upon two circumstances in their conduct, which evinced a close, instinctive knowledge of human nature in the combatants. The master would not condescend to argue off his throne—a piece of policy to which, in my opinion, he owed his victory (for he won); whereas the pupil insisted that he should meet him on equal ground, face to face, in

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the lower end of the room. It was evident that the latter could not divest himself of his boyish terror so long as the other sat, as it were, in the plentitude of his former authority, contracting his brows with habitual sternness, thundering out his arguments, with a most menacing and stentorian voice, while he thumped his desk with his shut fist, or struck it with his great ruler at the end of each argument, in a manner that made the youngster put his hands behind him several times, to be certain that that portion of his dress which is unmentionable was tight upon him. If in these encounters the young candidate for the honors of the literary sceptre was not victorious, he again resumed his studies, under his old preceptor, with renewed vigor and becoming humility; but if he put the schoolmaster down, his next object was to seek out some other teacher, whose celebrity was unclouded within his own range. With him he had a fresh encounter, and its result was similar to what I have already related.

If victorious, he sought out another and more learned opponent; and if defeated, he became the pupil of his conqueror—going night about, during his sojourn at the school, with the neighboring farmers' sons, whom he assisted in their studies, as a compensation for his support. He was called during these peregrinations, the Poor Scholar, a character which secured him the esteem and hospitable attention of the peasantry, who never fail in respect to any one characterized by a zeal for learning and knowledge.

In this manner he proceeded, a literary knight errant, filled with a chivalrous love of letters, which would have done honor to the most learned peripatetic of them all; enlarging his own powers, and making fresh acquisitions of knowledge as he went along. His contests, his defeats, and his triumphs, of course, were frequent; and his habits of thinking and reasoning must have been considerably improved, his acquaintance with classical and mathematical authors rendered more intimate, and his powers of illustration and comparison more clear and happy. After three or four years spent in this manner, he usually returned to his native place, sent another challenger to the schoolmaster, in the capacity of a candidate for his situation, and if successful, drove him out of the district, and established himself in his situation. The vanquished master sought a new district, sent a new challenge, in his turn, to some other teacher, and usually put him to flight in the same manner. The terms of defeat or victory, according to their application, were called sacking and bogging. "There was a great argument entirely, sir," said a peasant once, when speaking of these contests, "'twas at the chapel on Sunday week, betiane young Tom Brady, that was a poor scholar in Munsther, and Mr. Hartigan the schoolmaster."

"And who was victorious?" I inquired. "Why, sir, and maybe 'twas young Brady that didn't sack him clane before the priest and all, and went nigh to bog the priest himself in Greek. His Reverence was only two words beyant him; but he sacked the mather any how, and showed him in the Grammatical and Dixony where he was Wrong."

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“And what is Brady’s object in life?” I asked. “What does he intend to do.”

“Intend to do, is it? I am to do nothing less nor going into Trinity College in Dublin and expects to bate them all there, out and out: he’s first to make something they call a seizure; (\* Sizar) and, afther making that good he’s to be a counsellor. So, sir, you see what it is to resave good schoolin’, and to have the larnin’; but, indeed, it’s Brady that’s the great head-piece entirely.”

Unquestionably, many who received instruction in this manner have distinguished themselves in the Dublin University; and I have no hesitation in saying, that young men educated in Irish hedge schools, as they were called, have proved themselves to be better classical scholars and mathematicians, generally speaking, than any proportionate number of those educated in our first-rate academies. The Munster masters have long been, and still are, particularly celebrated for making excellent classical and mathematical scholars.

That a great deal of ludicrous pedantry generally accompanied this knowledge is not at all surprising, when we consider the rank these worthy teachers held in life, and the stretch of inflation at which their pride was kept by the profound reverence excited by their learning among the people. It is equally true, that each of them had a stock of *crambos* ready for accidental encounter, which would have puzzled Euclid or Sir Isaac Newton himself; but even these trained their minds to habits of acuteness and investigation. When a schoolmaster of this class had established himself as a good mathematician, the predominant enjoyment of his heart and life was to write the epithet Philomath after his name; and this, whatever document he subscribed, was never omitted. If he witnessed a will, it was Timothy Fagan, Philomath; if he put his name to a promissory note, it was Tim. Pagan, Philomath; if he addressed a love-letter to his sweetheart, it was still Timothy Fagan—or whatever the name might be—Philomath; and this was always written in legible and distinct copy-hand, sufficiently large to attract the observation of the reader.

It was also usual for a man who had been a preeminent and extraordinary scholar, to have the epithet Great prefixed to his name. I remember one of this description, who was called the Great O’Brien par excellence. In the latter years of his life he gave up teaching, and led a circulating life, going round from school to school, and remaining a week or a month alternately among his brethren. His visits were considered an honor, and raised considerably the literary character of those with whom he resided; for he spoke of dunces with the most dignified contempt, and the general impression was, that he would scorn even to avail himself of their hospitality. Like most of his brethren, he could not live without the poteen; and his custom was, to drink a pint of it in its native purity before he entered into any literary contest, or made any display of his learning at wakes or other Irish festivities; and most certainly, however blamable the practice, and injurious to health and morals, it threw out his talents and his powers in a most surprising manner.

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It was highly amusing to observe the peculiarity which the consciousness of superior knowledge impressed upon the conversation and personal appearance of this decaying race. Whatever might have been the original conformation of their physical structure, it was sure, by the force of acquired habit, to transform itself into a stiff, erect, consequential, and unbending manner, ludicrously characteristic of an inflated sense of their extraordinary knowledge, and a proud and commiserating contempt of the dark ignorance by which, in despite of their own light, they were surrounded. Their conversation, like their own *crambos*, was dark and difficult to be understood; their words, truly sesquipedalian; their voice, loud and commanding in its tones; their deportment, grave and dictatorial, but completely indescribable, and certainly original to the last degree, in those instances where the ready, genuine humor of their country maintained an unyielding rivalry in their disposition, against the natural solemnity which was considered necessary to keep up the due dignity of their character.

In many of these persons, where the original gayety of the disposition was known, all efforts at the grave and dignified were complete failures, and these were enjoyed by the peasantry and their own pupils, nearly with the sensations which the enactment of Hamlet by Liston would necessarily produce. At all events, their education, allowing for the usual exceptions, was by no means superficial; and the reader has already received a sketch of the trials which they had to undergo, before they considered themselves qualified to enter upon the duties of their calling. Their life was, in fact, a state of literary warfare; and they felt that a mere elementary knowledge of their business would have been insufficient to carry them, with suitable credit, through the attacks to which they were exposed from travelling teachers, whose mode of establishing themselves in schools, was, as I said, by driving away the less qualified, and usurping their places. This, according to the law of opinion and the custom which prevailed, was very easily effected, for the peasantry uniformly encouraged those whom they supposed to be the most competent; as to moral or religious instruction, neither was expected from them, so that the indifference of the moral character was no bar to their success.

The village of Findramore was situated at the foot of a long green hill, the outline of which formed a low arch, as it rose to the eye against the horizon. This hill was studded with clumps of beeches, and sometimes enclosed as a meadow. In the month of July, when the grass on it was long, many an hour have I spent in solitary enjoyment, watching the wavy motion produced upon its pliant surface by the sunny winds, or the flight of the cloud-shadows, like gigantic phantoms, as they swept rapidly over it, whilst the murmur of the rocking-trees, and the glancing of their bright



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leaves in the sun produced a heartfelt pleasure, the very memory of which rises in my imagination like some fading recollection of a brighter world. At the foot of this hill ran a clear, deep-banked river, bounded on one side by a slip of rich, level meadow, and on the other by a kind of common for the village geese, whose white feathers, during the summer season, lay scattered over its green surface. It was also the play-ground for the boys of the village school; for there ran that part of the river which, with very correct judgment, the urchins had selected as their bathing-place. A little slope, or watering-ground in the bank, brought them to the edge of the stream, where the bottom fell away into the fearful depths of the whirlpool, under the hanging oak on the other bank. Well do I remember the first time I ventured to swim across it, and even yet do I see, in imagination, the two bunches of water flaggons on which the inexperienced swimmers trusted themselves in the water.

About two hundred yards from this, the boreen (\* A little road) which led from the village to the main road, crossed the river, by one of those old narrow bridges whose arches rise like round ditches across the road—an almost impassable barrier to horse and car. On passing the bridge in a northern direction, you found a range of low thatched houses on each side of the road: and if one o'clock, the hour of dinner, drew near, you might observe columns of blue smoke curling up from a row of chimneys, some made of wicker creels plastered over with a rich coat of mud; some, of old, narrow, bottomless tubs; and others, with a greater appearance of taste, ornamented with thick, circular ropes of straw, sewed together like bees' skeps, with a peel of a briar; and many having nothing but the open vent above. But the smoke by no means escaped by its legitimate aperture, for you might observe little clouds of it bursting out of the doors and windows; the panes of the latter being mostly stopped at other times with old hats and rags, were now left entirely open for the purpose of giving it a free escape.

Before the doors, on right and left, was a series of dunghills, each with its concomitant sink of green, rotten water; and if it happened that a stout-looking woman, with watery eyes, and a yellow cap hung loosely upon her matted locks, came, with a chubby urchin on one arm, and a pot of dirty water in her hand, its unceremonious ejection in the aforesaid sink would be apt to send you up the village with your finger and thumb (for what purpose you would yourself perfectly understand) closely, but not knowingly, applied to your nostrils. But, independently of this, you would be apt to have other reasons for giving your horse, whose heels are by this time surrounded by a dozen of barking curs, and the same number of shouting urchins, a pretty sharp touch of the spurs, as well as for complaining bitterly of the odor of the atmosphere. It is no landscape without figures; and you might



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notice, if you are, as I suppose you to be, a man of observation, in every sink as you pass along, a “slip of a pig,” stretched in the middle of the mud, the very beau ideal of luxury, giving occasionally a long, luxuriant grunt, highly-expressive of his enjoyment; or, perhaps, an old farrower, lying in indolent repose, with half a dozen young ones jostling each other for their draught, and punching her belly with their little snouts, reckless of the fumes they are creating; whilst the loud crow of the cock, as he confidently flaps his wings on his own dunghill, gives the warning note for the hour of dinner.

As you advance, you will also perceive several faces thrust out of the doors, and rather than miss a sight of you, a grotesque visage peeping by a short cut through the paneless windows—or a tattered female flying to snatch up her urchin that has been tumbling itself, heels up, in the dust of the road, lest “the gentleman’s horse might ride over it;” and if you happen to look behind, you may observe a shaggy-headed youth in tattered frieze, with one hand thrust indolently in his breast, standing at the door in conversation with the inmates, a broad grin of sarcastic ridicule on his face, in the act of breaking a joke or two upon yourself, or your horse; or perhaps, your jaw may be saluted with a lump of clay, just hard enough not to fall asunder as it flies, cast by some ragged gorsoon from behind a hedge, who squats himself in a ridge of corn to avoid detection.

Seated upon a hob at the door, you may observe a toil-worn man, without coat or waistcoat; his red, muscular, sunburnt shoulder peering through the remnant of a skirt, mending his shoes with a piece of twisted flax, called a *lingel*, or, perhaps, sewing two footless stockings (or *martyeens*) to his coat, as a substitute for sleeves.

In the gardens, which are usually fringed with nettles, you will see a solitary laborer, working with that carelessness and apathy that characterizes an Irishman when he labors for himself—leaning upon his spade to look after you, glad of any excuse to be idle. The houses, however, are not all such as I have described—far from it. You see here and there, between the more humble cabins, a stout, comfortable-looking farmhouse, with ornamental thatching and well-glazed windows; adjoining to which is a hay-yard, with five or six large stacks of corn, well-trimmed and roped, and a fine, yellow, weather-beaten old hay-rick, half cut—not taking into account twelve or thirteen circular strata of stones, that mark out the foundations on which others had been raised. Neither is the rich smell of oaten or wheaten bread, which the good wife is baking on the griddle, unpleasant to your nostrils; nor would the bubbling of a large pot, in which you might see, should you chance to enter, a prodigious square of fat, yellow, and almost transparent bacon tumbling about, to be an unpleasant object; truly, as it hangs over a large fire, with well-swept hearthstone, it is in good keeping with the white settle and chairs, and the dresser with noggins, wooden trenchers, and pewter dishes, perfectly clean, and as well polished as a French courtier.

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As you leave the village, you have, to the left, a view of the hill which I have already described, and to the right a level expanse of fertile country, bounded by a good view of respectable mountains, peering decently into the sky; and in a line that forms an acute angle from the point of the road where you ride, is a delightful valley, in the bottom of which shines a pretty lake; and a little beyond, on the slope of a green hill, rises a splendid house, surrounded by a park, well wooded and stocked with deer. You have now topped the little hill above the village, and a straight line of level road, a mile long, goes forward to a country town, which lies immediately behind that white church, with its spire cutting into the sky, before you. You descend on the other side, and, having advanced a few perches, look to the left, where you see a long, thatched chapel, only distinguished from a dwelling-house by its want of chimneys and a small stone cross that stands on the top of the eastern gable; behind it is a graveyard; and beside it a snug public-house, well whitewashed; then, to the right, you observe a door apparently in the side of a clay bank, which rises considerably above the pavement of the road. What! you ask yourself, can this be a human habitation?—but ere you have time to answer the question, a confused buzz of voices from within reaches your ear, and the appearance of a little “gorsoon,” with a red, close-cropped head and Milesian face, having in his hand a short, white stick, or the thigh-bone of a horse, which you at once recognize as “the pass” of a village school, gives you the full information. He has an ink horn, covered with leather, dangling at the button-hole (for he has long since played away the buttons) of his frieze jacket—his mouth is circumscribed with a streak of ink—his pen is stuck knowingly behind his ear—his shins are dotted over with fire-blisters, black, red, and blue—on each heel a kibe—his “leather crackers,” videlicet—breeches shrunk up upon him, and only reaching as far down as the caps of his knees. Having spied you, he places his hand over his brows, to throw back the dazzling light of the sun, and peers at you from under it, till he breaks out into a laugh, exclaiming, half to himself, half to you:—

“You a gintleman!—no, nor one of your breed never was, you procthorin’ thief, you!”

You are now immediately opposite the door of the seminary, when half a dozen of those seated next it notice you.

“Oh, sir, here’s a gintleman on a horse!—masther, sir, here’s a-gintleman on a horse, wid boots and spurs on him, that’s looking in at us.”

“Silence!” exclaims the master; “back from the door; boys, rehearse; every one of you, rehearse, I say, you Boeotians, till the gintleman goes past!”

“I want to go out, if you plase, sir.”

“No, you don’t, Phelim.”

“I do, indeed, sir.”

“What!—is it after conthradictin’ me you’d be? Don’t you see the ‘porter’s’ out, and you can’t go.”

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“Well, ’tis Mat Meehan has it, sir: and he’s out this half-hour, sir; I can’t stay in, sir—iplrfff—iphfff!”

“You want to be idling your time looking at the gentleman, Phelim.”

“No, indeed, sir—iphfff!”

“Phelim, I know you of ould—go to your sate. I tell you, Phelim, you were born for the encouragement of the hemp manufacture, and you’ll die promoting it.”

In the meantime, the master puts his head out of the door, his body stooped to a “half bend”—a phrase, and the exact curve which it forms, I leave for the present to your own sagacity—and surveys you until you pass. That is an Irish hedge school, and the personage who follows you with his eye, a hedge schoolmaster. His name is Matthew Kavanagh; and, as you seem to consider his literary establishment rather a curiosity in its kind, I will, if you be disposed to hear it, give you the history of him and his establishment, beginning, in the first place, with

## THE ABDUCTION OF MAT KAVANAGH,

### THE HEDGE SCHOOLMASTER.

For about three years before the period of which I write, the village of Findramore, and the parish in which it lay, were without a teacher. Mat’s predecessor was a James Garraghty, a lame young man, the son of a widow, whose husband lost his life in attempting to extinguish a fire that broke out in the dwelling-house of Squire Johnston, a neighboring magistrate. The son was a boy at the time of this disaster, and the Squire, as some compensation for the loss of his father’s life in his service, had him educated at his own expense; that is to say, he gave the master who taught in the village orders to educate him gratuitously, on the condition of being horsewhipped out of the parish, if he refused. As soon as he considered himself qualified to teach, he opened a school in the village on his own account, where he taught until his death, which happened in less than a year after the commencement of his little seminary. The children usually assembled in his mother’s cabin; but as she did not long survive the son, this, which was at best a very miserable residence, soon tottered to the ground. The roof and thatch were burnt for firing, the mud gables fell in, and were overgrown with grass, nettles, and docks; and nothing remained but a foot or two of the little clay side-walls, which presented, when associated with the calamitous fate of their inoffensive inmates, rather a touching image of ruin upon a small scale.

Garraghty had been attentive to his little pupils, and his instructions were sufficient to give them a relish for education—a circumstance which did not escape the observation of their parents, who duly appreciated it. His death, however, deprived them of this

advantage; and as schoolmasters, under the old system, were always at a premium, it so happened, that for three years afterwards, not one of that class presented himself to their acceptance. Many a

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trial had been made, and many a sly offer held out, as a lure to the neighboring teachers, but they did not take; for although the country was densely inhabited, yet it was remarked that no schoolmaster ever “thruv” in the neighborhood of Findramore. The place, in fact, had got a bad name. Garraghty died, it was thought, of poverty, a disease to which the Findramore schoolmasters had been always known to be subject. His predecessor, too, was hanged, along with two others, for burning the house of an “Aagint.”

Then the Findramore boys were not easily dealt with, having an ugly habit of involving their unlucky teachers in those quarrels which they kept up with the Ballyscanlan boys, a fighting clan that lived at the foot of the mountains above them. These two factions, when they met, whether at fair or market, wake or wedding, could never part without carrying home on each side a dozen or two of bloody coxcombs. For these reasons, the parish of Aughindrum had for a few years been afflicted with an extraordinary dearth of knowledge; the only literary establishment which flourished in it being a parochial institution, which, however excellent in design, yet, like too many establishments of the same nature, it degenerated into a source of knowledge, morals, and education, exceedingly dry and unproductive to every person except the master, who was enabled by his honest industry to make a provision for his family absolutely surprising, when we consider the moderate nature of his ostensible income. It was, in fact, like a well dried up, to which scarcely any one ever thinks of going for water.

Such a state of things, however, could not last long. The youth of Findramore were parched for want of the dew of knowledge; and their parents and grown brethren met one Saturday evening in Barny Brady’s shebeen-house, to take into consideration the best means for procuring a resident schoolmaster for the village and neighborhood. It was a difficult point, and required great dexterity of management to enable them to devise any effectual remedy for the evil which they felt. There were present at this council, Tim Dolan, the senior of the village, and his three sons, Jem Coogan, Brian Murphy, Paddy Delany, Owen Roe O’Neil, Jack Traynor, and Andy Connell, with five or six others, whom it is not necessary to enumerate.

“Bring us in a quart, Barny,” said Dolan to Brady, whom on this occasion we must designate as the host; “and let it be rale hathen.”

“What do you mane, Tim?” replied the host.

“I mane,” continued Dolan, “stuff that was never christened, man alive.”

“Thin I’ll bring you the same that Father Maguire got last night on his way home afther anointin’ ’ould Katty Duffy,” replied Brady. “I’m sure, whatever I might be afther giving to strangers, Tim, I’d be long sorry to give *yous* anything but the right sort.”

“That’s a gay man, Barney,” said Traynor, “but off wid you like a shot, and let us get it under our tooth first, an’ then we’ll tell you more about it—A big rogue is the same Barney,” he added, after Brady had gone to bring in the poteen, “an’ never sells a dhrop that’s not one whiskey and five wathers.”

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"But he couldn't expose it on you; Jack," observed Connell; "you're too ould a hand about the pot for that. Warn't you in the mountains last week?"

"Ay: but the curse of Cromwell upon the thief of a gauger, Simpson—himself and a pack o' redcoats surrounded us when we war beginnin' to double, and the purtiest runnin' that ever you seen was lost; for you see, before you could cross yourself, we had the bottoms knocked clane out of the vessels; so that the villains didn't get a hole in our coats, as they thought they would."

"I tell you," observed O'Neil, "there's a bad pill\* somewhere about us."

\* This means a treacherous person who cannot depended upon.

"Ay, is there, Owen," replied Traynor; "and what is more, I don't think he's a hundhre miles from the place where we're sittin' in."

"Faith, maybe so Jack," returned the other.

"I'd never give into that," said Murphy. "'Tis Barny Brady that would never turn informer—the same thing isn't in him, nor in any of his breed; there's not a man in the parish I'd thrust sooner."

"I'd jist thrust him," replied Traynor, "as far as I could throw a cow by the tail. Arrah, what's the rason that the gauger never looks next or near his place, an' it's well known that he sells poteen widout a license, though he goes past his door wanst a week?"

"What the h—— is keepin' him at all?" inquired one of Dolan's sons.

"Look at him," said Traynor, "comin' in out of the garden; how much afeard he is! keepin' the whiskey in a phatie ridge—an' I'd kiss the book that he brought that bottle out in his pocket, instead of diggin' it up out o' the garden."

Whatever Brady's usual habits of *christening* his poteen might have been, that which he now placed before them was good. He laid the bottle on a little deal table with cross legs, and along with it a small drinking glass fixed in a bit of flat circular wood, as a substitute for the original bottom, which had been broken. They now entered upon the point, in question, without further delay.

"Come, Tim," said Coogan, "you're the ouldest man, and must spake first."

"Troth, man," replied Dolan, "beggin' your pardon, I'll dhrink first—healths apiece, your sowl; success boys—glory to ourselves, and confusion to the Scanlon boys, any way."



“And maybe,” observed Connell, “’tis we that didn’t lick them well in the last fair—they’re not able to meet the Findramore birds even on their own walk.”

“Well, boys,” said Delany, “about the masther? Our childre will grow up like bullockeens (\* little bullocks) widout knowing a ha’porth; and larning, you see, is a burdyen that’s asy carried.”

“Ay,” observed O’Neil, “as Solvester Maguire, the poet, used to say—

’Labor for larnin, before you grow ould,  
For larnin’ is better nor riches nor gould;  
Riches an’ gould they may vanquish away,  
But larnin’ alone it will never decay.”

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“Success, Owen! Why, you might put down the pot and warm an air to it,” said Murphy.

“Well, boys, are we all safe?” asked Traynor.

“Safe?” said old Dolan. “Arrah, what are you talkin’ about? Sure ’tisin’t of that same spalpeen of a gauger that we’d be afraid!”

During this observation, young Dolan pressed Traynor’s foot under the table, and they both went out for about five minutes.

“Father,” said the son, when he and Traynor re-entered the room, “you’re a wanting home.”

“Who wants me, Larry, avick?” says the father.

The son immediately whispered to him for a moment, when the old man instantly rose, got his hat, and after drinking another bumper of the poteen, departed.

“Twas hardly worth while,” said Delany; “the ould fellow is mettle to the back-bone, an’ would never show the garran-bane at any rate, even if he knew all about it.”

“Bad end to the syllable I’d let the same ould cock hear,” said the son; “the divil thrust any man that didn’t switch the primer (\* take and oath) for it, though he is my father; but now, boys, that the coast’s clear, and all safe—where will we get a schoolmaster? Mat Kavanagh won’t budge from the Scanlon boys, even if we war to put our hands undher his feet; and small blame to him—sure, you would not expect him to go against his own friends?”

“Faith, the gorsoons is in a bad state,” said Murphy; “but, boys where will we get a man that’s up? Why I know ’tis betther to have anybody nor be without one; but we might kill two birds wid one stone—if we could get a mather that would carry ‘Articles,’\* an’ swear in the boys, from time to time—an’ between ourselves, if there’s any danger of the hemp, we may as well lay it upon strange shoulders.”

\* A copy of the Whiteboy oath and regulations.

“Ay, but since Corrigan swung for the Aagint,” replied Delaney, “they’re a little modest in havin’ act or part wid us; but the best plan is to get an advartisement wrote out, an’ have it posted on the chapel door.”

This hint was debated with much earnestness; but as they were really anxious to have a master—in the first place, for the simple purpose of educating their children; and in the next, for filling the situation of director and regulator of their illegal Ribbon meetings—they determined on penning an advertisement, according to the suggestion of Delaney.

After drinking another bottle, and amusing themselves with some further chat, one of the Dolans undertook to draw up the advertisement, which ran as follows:—

“ADVARTAAISEMENT.”

*“Notes to Schoolmasters, and to all others whom it may consarn.*

*“Wanted,*

“For the nabourhood and the vircinity of the Townland of Findramore, in the Parish of Aughindrum, in the Barony of Lisnamoghry, County of Sligo, Province of Connaught, Ireland.

*“To schoolmasters.’*

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“Take Notes—That any Schoolmaster who understands Spellin’ gramatically—Readin’ and Writin’, in the raal way, accordin’ to the Dixonary—Arithmatick, that is to say, the five common rules, namely, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division—and addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, of Dives’s denominations. Also reduction up and down—cross multiplication of coin—the Rule of Three Direck—the Rule of Three in verse—the double Rule of Three—Frackshins taught according to the vulgar and decimatin’ method; and must be well practised to tache the Findramore boys how to manage the Scuffle.\*

\* The Scuffle was an exercise in fractions, illustrated by a quarrel between the first four letters of the alphabet, who went to loggerheads about a sugar-plum. A, for instance, seized upon three-fourths of it; but B snapped two-thirds of what he had got, and put it into his hat; C then knocked off his hat, and as worthy Mr. Gough says, “to Work they went.” After kicking and cuffing each other in prime style, each now losing and again gaining alternately, the question is wound up by requiring the pupil to ascertain what quantity of the sugar-plum each had at the close.

“N.B. He must be will grounded in *that*. Practis, Discount, and *Rebatin’*. N.B. Must be well grounded in that also.

“Tret and Tare—Fellowship—Allegation—Barther—Rates per Scent—Intherest—Exchange—Prophet in Loss—the Square root—the Kibe Root—Hippothenuse—’Arithmetical and Jommetrical Purgation—Compound Intherest—Loggerheadism—Questions for exercise, and the Conendix to Algibbra. He must also know Jommithry accordin’ to Grunther’s scale—the Castigation of the Klipsticks—Surveying, and the use of the Jacob-staff.

“N.B. Would get a good dale of Surveyin’ to do in the vircinity of Findramore, particularly in *Con-acre* time. If he know the use of the globe, it would be an accusation. He must also understand the Three Sets of Book-keeping, by single and double entry, particularly Loftus & Company of Paris, their Account of Cash and Company. And above all things, he must know how to tache the *Sarvin’ of Mass* in Latin, and be able to read Doctor Gallaher’s Irish Sarmints, and explain Kolumkill’s and Pasterini’s Prophecies.

“N.B. If he understands *Cudgel-fencin’*, it would be an accusation also—but mustn’t tache us wid a staff that bends in the middle, bekase it breaks one’s head across the guard. Any schoolmaster capacious and collified to instruct in the above-mentioned branches, would get a good school in the townland Findramore and its vircinity, be well fed, an’ get the hoith o’ good livin’ among the farmers, an’ would be ped—

“For Book-keepin’, the three sets, *a ginny and half*.’

“For Gommethry, &c, *half a qinny a quarther*.

“Arithmetic, *aight and three-hapuns*.

“Readin”, Writin’, &c, *six Hogs*.

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"Given under our hands, this 37th day of June, 18004.

"Larry Dolan.

"Dick Dolan, his (X) mark.

"Jem Coogan, his (X) mark.

"Brine Murphey.

"Paddy Delany, his (X) mark.

"Jack Traynor.

"Andy Connell.

"Owen Roe O'Neil, his (X) mark."

"N.B. *By making airy application to any of the undher-mintioned, he will hear of further particklers*; and if they find that he will shoot them, he may expect the best o' thratement, an' be well fed among the farmers.\*

"N.B. Would get also a good *Night-school* among the vircinity."

\* Nothing can more decidedly prove the singular and extraordinary thirst for education and general knowledge which characterizes the Irish people, than the shifts to which they have often gone in order to gain even a limited portion of instruction. Of this the Irish Night School is a complete illustration. The Night School was always opened either for those of early age, who from their poverty were forced to earn something for their own support during the day; or to assist their parents; or for grown young men who had never had an opportunity of acquiring education in their youth, but who now devoted a couple of hours during a winter's night, when they could do nothing else, to the acquisition of reading and writing, and sometimes of accounts. I know not how it was, but the Night School boys, although often thrown into the way of temptation, always conducted themselves with singular propriety. Indeed, the fact is, after all, pretty easily accounted for—inasmuch as none but the steadiest, *most* sensible, and best conducted young men ever attended it.

Having penned the above advertisement, it was carefully posted early the next morning on the chapel-doors, with an expectation on the part of the patrons that it would not be wholly fruitless. The next week, however, passed without an application—the second also—and the third produced the same result; nor was there the slightest prospect of a school-master being blown by any wind to the lovers of learning at Findramore. In the meantime, the Ballyscanlan boys took care to keep up the ill-natured prejudice which had been circulated concerning the fatality that uniformly attended such schoolmasters as settled there; and when this came to the ears of the Findramore folk, it was once more resolved that the advertisement should be again put up, with a clause containing an explanation on that point. The clause ran as follows:

"N.B.—The two last masthers that was hanged out of Findramore, that is, Mickey Corrigan, who was hanged for killing the Aagent, and Jem Garraghty, that died of a

declension—Jem died in consequence of ill-health, and Mickey was hanged contrary to his own wishes; so that it wasn't either of their faults—as witness our hands this 207th of July.

“Dick Dolan, his (X) mark.”

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This explanation, however, was as fruitless as the original advertisement; and week after week passed over without an offer from a single candidate. The “vicinity” of Findramore and its “naborhood” seemed devoted to ignorance; and nothing remained, except another effort at procuring a master by some more ingenious contrivance.

Debate after debate was consequently held in Barney Brady’s; and, until a fresh suggestion was made by Delany, the prospect seemed as bad as ever. Delany, at length fell upon a new plan; and it must be confessed, that it was marked in a peculiar manner by a spirit of great originality and enterprise, it being nothing less than a proposal to carry off, by force or stratagem, Mat Kavanagh, who was at that time fixed in the throne of literature among the Ballyscanlan boys, quite unconscious of the honorable translation to the neighborhood of Findramore which was intended for him. The project, when broached, was certainly a startling one, and drove most of them to a pause, before they were sufficiently collected to give an opinion on its merits.

“Nothin’, boys, is asier,” said Delaney. “There’s to be a pattrn in Ballymagowan, on next Sathurday—an’ that’s jist half way betune ourselves and the Scanlan boys. Let us musther, an’ go there, any how. We can keep an eye on Mat widout much trouble, an’ when opportunity sarves, nick him at wanst, an’ off wid him clane.”

“But,” said Traynor, “what would we do wid him when he’d be here? Wouldn’t he cut an’ run the first opportunity.

“How can he, ye omadhawn, if we put a manwill\* in our pocket, an’ sware him? But we’ll butther him up when he’s among us; or, be me sowks, if it goes that, force him either to settle wid ourselves, or to make himself scarce in the country entirely.”

\* Manual, a Roman Catholic prayer-book, generally pronounced as above.

“Divil a much force it’ll take to keep him, I’m thinkin’,” observed Murphy. “He’ll have three times a betther school here; and if he wanst settled, I’ll engage he would take to it kindly.”

“See here, boys,” says Dick Dolan, in a whisper, “if that bloody villain, Brady, isn’t afther standin’ this quarter of an hour, strivin’ to hear what we’re about; but it’s well we didn’t bring up anything consarnin’ the other business; didn’t I tell yees the desate was in ’im? Look at his shadow on the wall forninst us.”

“Hould yer tongues, boys,” said Traynor; “jist keep never mindin’, and, be me sowks, I’ll make him sup sorrow for that thrick.”





“You had bettther neither make nor meddle wid him,” observed Delany, “jist put him out o’ that—but don’t rise yer hand to him, or he’ll sarve you as he did Jem Flannagan: put ye three or four months in the *Stone Jug*” (\* Gaol).

Traynor, however, had gone out while he was speaking, and in a few minutes dragged in Brady, whom he caught in the very act of eaves-dropping.

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"Jist come in, Brady," said Traynor, as he dragged him along; "walk in, man alive; sure, and sich an honest man as you are needn't be afeard of lookin' his friends in the face! Ho!—an' be me sowl, is it a spy we've got; and, I suppose, would be an informer' too, if he had heard anything to tell!"

"What's the manin' of this, boys?" exclaimed the others, feigning ignorance. "Let the honest man go, Traynor. What do ye hawl him that way for, ye gallis pet'?"

"Honest!" replied Traynor; "how very honest he is, the desavin' villain, to be stand-in' at the windy there, wantin' to overhear the little harmless talk we had."

"Come, Traynor," said Brady, seizing him in his turn by the neck, "take your hands off of me, or, bad fate to me, but I'll lave ye a mark."

Traynor, in his turn, had his hand twisted in Brady's cravat, which he drew tightly about his neck, until the other got nearly black in the face.

"Let me go you villain!" exclaimed Brady, "or, by this blessed night that's in it, it'll be worse for you."

"Villain, is it?" replied Traynor, making a blow at him, whilst Brady snatched, at a penknife, which one of the others had placed on the table, after picking the tobacco out of his pipe—intending either to stab Traynor, or to cut the knot of the cravat by which he was held. The others, however, interfered, and presented further mischief.

"Brady," said Traynor, "you'll rue this night, if ever a man did, you tracherous in-formin' villian. What an honest spy we have among us!—and a short coorse to you!"

"O, hould yer tongue, Traynor!" replied Brady: "I believe it's best known who is both the spy and the informer. The divil a pint of poteen ever you'll run in this parish, until you clear yourself of bringing the gauger on the Tracys, bekase they tuck Mick M'Kew, in preference to yourself, to run it for them."

Traynor made another attempt to strike him, but was prevented. The rest now interfered; and, in the course of an hour or so, an adjustment took place.

Brady took up the tongs, and swore "by that blessed iron," that he neither heard, nor intended to hear, anything they said; and this exculpation was followed by a fresh bottle at his own expense.

"You omadhawn," said he to Traynor, "I was only puttin' up a dozen o' bottles into the tatch of the house, when you thought I was listenin';" and, as a proof of the truth of this, he brought them out, and showed them some bottles of poteen, neatly covered up under the thatch.

Before their separation they finally planned the abduction of Kavanagh from the Patron, on the Saturday following, and after drinking another round went home to their respective dwellings.

In this speculation, however, they experienced a fresh disappointment; for, ere Saturday arrived, whether in consequence of secret intimation of their intention from Brady, or some friend, or in compliance with the offer of a better situation, the fact was, that Mat Kavanagh had removed to another school, distant about eighteen miles from Findramore. But they were not to be outdone; a new plan was laid, and in the course of the next week a dozen of the most enterprising and intrepid of the “boys,” mounted each upon a good horse, went to Mat’s new residence for the express purpose of securing him.

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Perhaps our readers may scarcely believe that a love of learning was so strong among the inhabitants of Findramore as to occasion their taking such remarkable steps for establishing a schoolmaster among them; but the country was densely inhabited, the rising population exceedingly numerous, and the outcry for a schoolmaster amongst the parents of the children loud and importunate.

The fact, therefore, was, that a very strong motive stimulated the inhabitants of Findramore in their efforts to procure a master. The old and middle-aged heads of families were actuated by a simple wish, inseparable from Irishmen, to have their children educated; and the young men, by a determination to have a properly qualified person to conduct their Night Schools, and improve them in their reading, writing, and arithmetic. The circumstance I am now relating is one which actually took place: and any man acquainted with the remote parts of Ireland, may have often seen bloody and obstinate quarrels among the peasantry, in vindicating a priority of claim to the local residence of a schoolmaster among them. I could, within my own experience, relate two or three instances of this nature.

It was one Saturday night, in the latter end of the month of May, that a dozen Findramore “boys,” as they were called, set out upon this most singular of all literary speculations, resolved, at whatever risk, to secure the person and effect the permanent bodily presence among them of the Redoubtable Mat Kavanagh. Each man was mounted on a horse, and one of them brought a spare steed for the accommodation of the schoolmaster. The caparison of this horse was somewhat remarkable: wooden straddle, such as used by the peasantry for carrying wicker paniers creels, which are hung upon two wooden pins, that stand up out of its sides. Underneath was a straw mat, to prevent the horse’s back from being stripped by it. On one side of this hung a large creel, and on the other a strong sack, tied round a stone merely of sufficient weight to balance the empty creel. The night was warm and clear, the moon and stars all threw their mellow light from a serene, unclouded sky, and the repose of nature in the short nights of this delightful season, resembles that of a young virgin of sixteen—still, light, and glowing. Their way, for the most part of their journey, lay through a solitary mountain-road; and, as they did not undertake the enterprise without a good stock of poteen, their light-hearted songs and choruses awoke the echoes that slept in the mountain glens as they went along. The adventure, it is true, had as much of frolic as of seriousness in it; and merely as the means of a day’s fun for the boys, it was the more eagerly entered into.

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It was about midnight when they left home, and as they did not wish to arrive at the village to which they were bound, until the morning should be rather advanced, the journey was as slowly performed as possible. Every remarkable object on the way was noticed, and its history, if any particular association was connected with it, minutely detailed, whenever it happened to be known. When the sun rose, many beautiful green spots and hawthorn valleys excited, even from these unpolished and illiterate peasants, warm bursts of admiration at their fragrance and beauty. In some places, the dark flowery heath clothed the mountains to the tops, from which the gray mists, lit by a flood of light, and breaking into masses before the morning breeze, began to descend into the valleys beneath them; whilst the voice of the grouse, the bleating of sheep and lambs, the pee-weet of the wheeling lap-wing, and the song of the lark threw life and animation the previous stillness of the country, sometimes a shallow river would cross the road winding off into a valley that was overhung, on one side, by rugged precipices clothed with luxurious heath and wild ash; whilst on the other it was skirted by a long sweep of greensward, skimmed by the twittering swallow, over which lay scattered numbers of sheep, cows, brood mares, and colts—many of them rising and stretching themselves ere they resumed their pasture, leaving the spots on which they lay of a deeper green. Occasionally, too, a sly-looking fox might be seen lurking about a solitary lamb, or brushing over the hills with a fat goose upon his back, retreating to his den among the inaccessible rocks, after having plundered some unsuspecting farmer.

As they advanced into the skirts of the cultivated country, they met many other beautiful spots of scenery among the upland, considerable portions of which, particularly in long sloping valleys, that faced the morning sun, were covered with hazel and brushwood, where the unceasing and simple notes of the cuckoo were incessantly plied, mingled with the more mellow and varied notes of the thrush and blackbird. Sometimes the bright summer waterfall seemed, in the rays of the sun, like a column of light, and the springs that issued from the sides of the more distant and lofty mountains shone with a steady, dazzling brightness, on which the eye could scarcely rest. The morning, indeed, was beautiful, the fields in bloom, and every thing cheerful. As the sun rose in the heavens, nature began gradually to awaken into life and happiness; nor was the natural grandeur of a Sabbath summer morning among these piles of magnificent mountains—nor its heartfelt, but more artificial beauty in the cultivated country, lost, even upon the unphilosophical “boys” of Findramore; so true is it, that such exquisite appearances of nature will force enjoyment upon the most uncultivated heart.

When they had arrived within two miles of the little town in which Mat Kavanagh was fixed, they turned off into a deep glen, a little to the left; and, after having seated themselves under a white-thorn which grew on the banks of a rivulet, they began to devise the best immediate measures to be taken.

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"Boys," said Tim Dolan, "how will we manage now with this thief of a schoolmaster, at all? Come, Jack Traynor, you that's up to still-house work—escapin' and carryin' away stills from gaugers, the bloody villains! out wid yer spake, till we hear your opinion."

"Do ye think, boys," said Andy Connell, "that we could flatter him to come by fair mains?"

"Flatther him!" said Traynor; "and, by my sowl, if we flatther him at all, it must be by the hair of the head. No, no; let us bring him first, whether he will or not, an' ax his consent aftherwards!"

"I'll tell you what it is, boys," continued Connell, "I'll hould a wager, if you lave him to me, I'll bring him wid his own consint."

"No, nor sorra that you'll do, nor could do," replied Traynor: "for, along wid every thing else, he thinks he's not jist doated on by the Findramore people, being one of the Ballyscanlan tribe. No, no; let two of us go to his place, and purtind that we have other business in the fair of Clansallagh on Monday next, and ax him in to dhrink, for he'll not refuse that, any how; then, when he's half tipsy, ax him to convoy us this far; we'll then meet you here, an' tell him some palaver or other—sit down where we are now, and, afther making him dead dhrunk, hoist a big stone in the creel, and Mat in the sack, on the other side, wid his head out, and off wid him; and he will know neither act nor part about it till we're at Findramore."

Having approved of this project, they pulled out each a substantial complement of stout oaten bread, which served, along with the whiskey, for breakfast. The two persons pitched on for decoying Mat were Dolan and Traynor, who accordingly set out, full of glee at the singularity and drollness of their undertaking. It is unnecessary to detail the ingenuity with which they went about it, because, in consequence of Kavanagh's love of drink, very little ingenuity was necessary. One circumstance, however, came to light, which gave them much encouragement, and that was a discovery that Mat by no means relished his situation.

In the meantime, those who stayed behind in the glen felt their patience begin to flag a little, because of the delay made by the others, who had promised, if possible, to have the schoolmaster in the glen before two o'clock. But the fact was, that Mat, who was far less deficient in hospitality than in learning, brought them into his house, and not only treated them to plenty of whiskey, but made the wife prepare a dinner, for which he detained them, swearing, that except they stopped to partake of it, he would not convoy them to the place appointed. Evening was, therefore, tolerably far advanced, when they made their appearance at the glen, in a very equivocal state of sobriety—Mat being by far the steadiest of the three, but still considerably the worse for what he had taken. He was now welcomed by a general huzza; and on his expressing surprise at their appearance, they pointed to their horses, telling him that they were bound for the fair of

Clansallagh, for the purpose of selling them. This was the more probable, as, when a fair occurs in Ireland, it is usual for cattle-dealers, particularly horse-jockeys, to effect sales, and “show” their horses on the evening before.

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Mat now sat down, and was vigorously plied with strong poteen—songs were sung, stories told, and every device resorted to that was calculated to draw out and heighten his sense of enjoyment; nor were their efforts without success; for, in the course of a short time, Mat was free from all earthly care, being incapable of either speaking or standing.

“Now, boys,” said Dolan, “let us do the thing clane an’ dacent. Let you, Jem Coogan, Brian Murphy, Paddy Delany, and Andy O’Donnell, go back, and tell the wife and two childher a cock-and-a-bull story about Mat—say that he is coming to Findramore for good and all, and that’ll be thruth, you know; and that he ordhered yez to bring her and them afther him; and we can come back for the furniture to-morrow.”

A word was enough—they immediately set off; and the others, not wishing that Mat’s wife should witness the mode of his conveyance, proceeded home, for it was now dusk. The plan succeeded admirably; and in a short time the wife and children, mounted behind the “boys” on the horses, were on the way after them to Findramore.

The reader is already aware of the plan they had adopted for translating Mat; but, as it was extremely original, I will explain it somewhat more fully. The moment the schoolmaster was intoxicated to the necessary point—that is to say, totally helpless and insensible—they opened the sack and put him in, heels foremost, tying it in such a way about his neck as might prevent his head from getting into it: thus avoiding the danger of suffocation. The sack, with Mat at full length in it, was then fixed to the pin of the straddle, so that he was in an erect posture during the whole journey. A creel was then hung at the other side, in which was placed a large stone, of sufficient weight to preserve an equilibrium; and, to prevent any accident, a droll fellow sat astride behind the straddle, amusing himself and the rest by breaking jokes upon the novelty of Mat’s situation.

“Well, Mat, *ma bouchal*, how duv ye like your sitivation? I believe, for all your larnin’, the Findramore boys have sacked you at last!”

[Illustration: PAGE 831— The Findramore boys have sacked you at last]

“Ay!” exclaimed another, “he is sacked at last, in spite of his Matthew-maticks.”

“An’, be my sowks,” observed Traynor, “he’d be a long time goin’ up a Maypowl in the state he’s in—his own snail would bate him.”\*

\* This alludes to a question in Gough’s Arithmetic, which is considered difficult by hedge schoolmasters.

“Yes,” said another; “but he desarves credit for travelin’ from Clansallagh to Findramore, widout layin’ a foot to the ground—





“Wan day wid Captain Whiskey I wrastled a fall,  
But faith I was no match for the captain at all—  
But faith I was no match for the captain at all,  
Though the landlady’s measures they were damnable small.  
Tooral, looral, looral lorral lido.’

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Whoo—hurroo! my darlings—success to the Findramore boys!  
Hurroo—hurroo—the Findramore boys for ever!”

“Boys, did ever ye hear the song Mat made on Ned Mullen’s fight wid  
Jemmy Connor’s gander? Well here is part of it, to the tune of ‘Brian  
O’Lynn’—

‘As Ned and the gander wor basting each other,  
I hard a loud cry from the gray goose, his mother;  
I ran to assist him, wid very great speed.  
But before I arrived the poor gander did bleed.

‘Alas!’ says the gander, ‘I’m very ill-trated,  
For traicherous Mullen has me fairly defated;  
Bud had you been here for to show me fair play,  
I could leather his *puckan* around the lee bray.’

“Bravo! Matt,” addressing the insensible schoolmaster—“success, poet. Hurroo for the  
Findramore boys! the Bridge boys for ever!”

They then commenced, in a tone of mock gravity, to lecture him upon his future duties—detailing the advantages of his situation, and the comforts he would enjoy among them—although they might as well have addressed themselves to the stone on the other side. In this manner they got along, amusing themselves at Mat’s expense, and highly elated at the success of their undertaking. About three o’clock in the morning they reached the top of the little hill above the village, when, on looking back along the level stretch of road which I have already described, they noticed their companions, with Mat’s wife and children, moving briskly after them. A general huzza now took place, which, in a few minutes, was answered by two or three dozen of the young folks, who were assembled in Barny Brady’s waiting for their arrival. The scene now became quite animated—cheer after cheer succeeded—jokes, laughter, and rustic wit, pointed by the spirit of Brady’s pooten, flew briskly about. When Mat was unsacked, several of them came up, and shaking him cordially by the hand, welcomed him among them. To the kindness of this reception, however, Mat was wholly insensible, having been for the greater part of the journey in a profound sleep. The boys now slipped the loop of the sack off the straddle-pin; and, carrying Mat into a farmer’s house, they deposited him in a settle-bed, where he slept unconscious of the journey he had performed, until breakfast-time on the next morning. In the mean time, the wife and children were taken care of by Mrs. Connell, who provided them with a bed, and every other comfort which they could require.

The next morning, when Mat awoke, his first call was for a drink. I should have here observed, that Mrs. Kavanagh had been sent for by the good woman in whose house Mat had slept, that they might all breakfast and have a drop together, for they had

already succeeded in reconciling her to the change. “Wather!” said Mat—“a drink of wather, if it’s to be had for love or money, or I’ll split wid druth—I’m all in a state of conflagration; and my head—by the sowl of Newton, the inventor of fluxions, but my head is a complete illucidation of the centrifugal motion, so it is. Tundher-an’-turf! is there no wather to be had? Nancy, I say, for God’s sake, quicken yourself with the hydraulics, or the best mathematician in Ireland’s gone to the abode of Euclid and Pythagoras, that first invented the multiplication table.”

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On cooling his burning blood with the “hydraulics,” he again lay down with the intention of composing himself for another sleep; but his eye having noticed the novelty of his situation, he once more called Nancy.

“Nancy avourneen,” he inquired, “will you be afther resolving me one single proposition. —Where am I at the present spaking? Is it in the Siminary at home, Nancy?” Nancy, in the mean time, had been desired to answer in the affirmative, hoping that if his mind was made easy on that point, he might refresh himself by another hour or two’s sleep, as he appeared to be not at all free from the effects of his previous intoxication.

“Why, Mat, jewel, where else could you be, alannah, but at home? Sure isn’t here Jack, an’ Biddy, an’ myself, Mat, agra, along wid me. Your head isn’t well, but all you want is a good rousin’ sleep.”

“Very well, Nancy; very well, that’s enough—quite satisfactory—quod erat demonstrandum. May all kinds of bad luck rest upon the Findramore boys, any way! The unlucky vagabonds—I’m the third they’ve done up. Nancy, off wid ye, like quicksilver for the priest.”

“The priest! Why, Mat, jewel, what puts that into your head? Sure, there’s nothing wrong wid ye, only the sup o’ drink you tuck yesterday.”

“Go, woman,” said Mat; “did you ever know me to make a wrong calculation—I tell you I’m non compos mentis from head to heel. Head! by my sowl, Nancy, it’ll soon be a capui mortuum wid me—I’m far gone in a disease they call an opthical delusion—the devil a thing less it is—me bein’ in my own place, an’ to think I’m lyin’ in a settle bed; that there is a large dresser, covered wid pewter dishes and plates; and to crown all, the door on the wrong side of the house! Off wid ye, and tell his Reverence that I want to be anointed, and to die in pace and charity wid all men. May the most especial kind of bad luck light down upon you, Findramore, and all that’s in you, both man and baste—you have given me my gruel along wid the rest; but, thank God, you won’t hang me, any how! Off, Nancy, for the priest, till I die like a Christhan, in pace and forgiveness wid the world;—all kinds of hard fortune to them! Make haste, woman, if you expect me to die like a Christhan. If they had let me alone till I’d publish to the world my Treatise upon Conic Sections—but to be cut off on my march to fame! another draught of the hydraulics, Nancy, an’ then for the priest—But see, bring Father Connell, the curate, for he understands something about Matthew-maticks; an’ never heed Father Roger, for divil a thing he knows about them, not even the difference between a right line and a curve—in the page of histhory, to his everlasting disgrace, be the same recorded!”

“Mat,” replied Nancy, scarcely preserving her gravity, “keep yourself from talkin’, an’ fall asleep, then you’ll be well enough.”

“Is there e’er a sup at all in the house?” said Mat; “if there is, let me get it; for there’s an ould proverb, though it’s a most unmathematical axiom as ever was invinted—’try a hair of the same dog that bit you;’ give me a glass, Nancy, an’ you can go for Father Connell after. Oh, by the sowl of Isaac, that invented fluxions, what’s this for?”

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A general burst-of laughter followed this demand and ejaculation; and Mat sat up once more in the settle, and examined the place with keener scrutiny. Nancy herself laughed heartily; and, as she handed him the full glass, entered into an explanation of the circumstances attending his translation. Mat, at all times rather of pliant disposition, felt rejoiced on finding that he was still *compos mentis*; and on hearing what took place, he could not help entering into the humor of the enterprise, at which he laughed as heartily as any of them.

“Mat,” said, the farmer, and half a dozen of the neighbors, “you’re a happy man, there’s a hundred of the boys have a school-house half built for you this same blessed sunshiny mornin’, while your lying at aise in your bed.”

“By the sowl of Newton, that invented fluxions!” replied Mat, “but I’ll take revenge for the disgrace you put upon my profession, by stringing up a schoolmaster among you, and I’ll hang you all! It’s death to steal a four-footed animal; but what do you deserve for stealin’ a Christian baste, a two-legged schoolmaster without feathers, eighteen miles, and he not to know it?”

In the course of a short time Mat was dressed, and having found benefit from the “hair of the dog that bit him,” he tried another glass, which strung his nerves, or, as he himself expressed it—“they’ve got the rale mathematical tinsion again.” What the farmer said, however, about the school-house had been true. Early that morning all the growing and grown young men of Findramore and its “vircinity” had assembled, selected a suitable spot, and, with merry hearts, were then busily engaged in erecting a school-house for their general accomodation.

The manner of building hedge school-houses being rather curious, I will describe it. The usual spot selected for their erection is a ditch in the road-side; in some situation where there will be as little damp as possible. From such a spot an excavation is made equal to the size of the building, so that, when this is scooped out, the back side-wall, and the two gables are already formed, the banks being dug perpendicularly. The front side-wall, with a window in each side of the door, is then built of clay or green sods laid along in rows; the gables are also topped with sods, and, perhaps, a row or two laid upon the back side-wall, if it should be considered too low. Having got the erection of Mat’s house thus far, they procured a scraw-spade, and repaired with a couple of dozen of cars to the next bog, from which they cut the light heathy surface in strips the length of the roof. A scraw-spade is an instrument resembling the letter T, with an iron plate at the lower end, considerably bent, and well adapted to the purpose for which it is intended. Whilst one party cut the scraws, another bound the *couples and bauks\** and a third cut as many green branches as were sufficient to wattle it. The couples, being bound, were raised—the ribs laid on—then the wattles, and afterwards the scraws.

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\* The couples are shaped like the letter A, and sustain the roof; the bauks, or rafters, cross them from one side to another like the line inside the letter.

Whilst these successive processes went forward, many others had been engaged all the morning cutting rushes; and the scraws were no sooner laid on, than half a dozen thatchers mounted the roof, and long before the evening was closed, a school-house, capable of holding near two hundred children, was finished. But among the peasantry no new house is ever put up without a hearth-warming and a dance. Accordingly the clay floor was paired—a fiddler procured—Barney Brady and his stock of poteen sent for; the young women of the village and surrounding neighborhood attended in their best finery; dancing commenced—and it was four o'clock the next morning when the merry-makers departed, leaving Mat a new home and a hard floor, ready for the reception of his scholars.

Business now commenced. At nine o'clock the next day Mat's furniture was settled in a small cabin, given to him at a cheap rate by one of the neighboring farmers; for, whilst the school-house was being built, two men, with horses and cars, had gone to Clansallagh, accompanied by Nancy, and removed the furniture, such as it was, to their new residence. Nor was Mat, upon the whole, displeased at what had happened; for he was now fixed in a flourishing country—fertile and well cultivated; nay, the bright landscape which his school-house commanded was sufficient in itself to reconcile him to his situation. The inhabitants were in comparatively good circumstances; many of them wealthy, respectable farmers, and capable of remunerating him very decently for his literary labors; and what was equally flattering, there was a certainty of his having a numerous and well-attended school in a neighborhood with whose inhabitants he was acquainted.

Honest, kind-hearted Paddy!—pity that you should ever feel distress or hunger—pity that you should be compelled to seek, in another land, the hard-earned pittance by which you keep the humble cabin over your chaste wife and naked children! Alas! what noble materials for composing a national character, of which humanity might be justly proud, do the lower orders of the Irish possess, if raised and cultivated by an enlightened education! Pardon me, gentle reader, for this momentary ebullition; I grant I am a little dark now. I assure you, however, the tear of enthusiastic admiration is warm on my eye-lids, when I remember the flitches of bacon, the sacks of potatoes, the bags of meal, the miscowns of butter, and the dishes of eggs—not omitting crate after crate of turf which came in such rapid succession to Mat Kavanagh, during the first week on which he opened his school. Ay, and many a bottle of stout poteen, when

“The eye of the gauger saw it not,”

was, with a sly, good-humored wink, handed over to Mat, or Nancy, no matter which, from under the comfortable drab jock, with velvet-covered collar, erect about the honest,

ruddy face of a warm, smiling farmer, or even the tattered frieze of a poor laborer—-anxious to secure the attention of the “mather” to his little “Shoneen,” whom, in the extravagance of his ambition, he destined to “wear the robes as a clargy.” Let no man say, I repeat, that the Irish are not fond of education.



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In the course of a month Mat's school was full to the door posts, for, in fact, he had the parish to himself—many attending from a distance of three, four, and five miles. His merits, however, were believed to be great, and his character for learning stood high, though unjustly so: for a more superficial, and at the same time, a more presuming dunce never existed; but his character alone could secure him a good attendance; he, therefore, belied the unfavorable prejudices against the Findramore folk, which had gone abroad, and was a proof, in his own person, that the reason of the former schoolmasters' miscarriage lay in the belief of their incapacity which existed among the people. But Mat was one of those showy, shallow fellows, who did not lack for assurance.

The first step a hedge schoolmaster took, on establishing himself in a school, was to write out, in his best copperplate hand, a flaming advertisement, detailing, at full length, the several branches he professed himself capable of teaching. I have seen many of these—as who that is acquainted with Ireland has not?—and, beyond all doubt, if the persons that issued them were acquainted with the various heads recapitulated, they must have been buried in the most profound obscurity, as no man but a walking Encyclopaedia—an admirable Crichton—could claim an intimacy with them, embracing, as they often did, the whole circle of human knowledge. 'Tis true, the vanity of the pedagogue had full scope in these advertisements, as there was none to bring him to an account, except some rival, who could only attack him on those practical subjects which were known to both. Independently of this, there was a good-natured collusion between them on those points which were beyond their knowledge, inasmuch as they were not practical but speculative, and by no means involved their character or personal interests. On the next Sunday, therefore, after Mat's establishment at Findrainore, you might see a circle of the peasantry assembled at the chapel door, perusing, with suitable reverence and admiration on their faces, the following advertisement; or, perhaps, Mat himself, with a learned, consequential air, in the act of “expounding” it to them.

“Mr. Matthew Kavanagh, Philomath and' Professor of the Learned Languages, begs leave to inform the Inhabitants of Findramore and' its vicinity, that he lectures on the following branches of Education, in his Seminary at the above-recited place:—

“Spelling, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, upon altogether new principles, hitherto undiscovered by any excepting himself, and for which he expects a Patent from Trinity College, Dublin; or, at any rate, from Squire Johnston, Esq., who paternizes many of the pupils; Book-keeping, by single and double entry—Geometry, Trigonometry, Stereometry, Mensuration, Navigation, Guaging, Surveying, Dialling, Astronomy, Astrology, Austerity, Fluxions, Geography, ancient and modern—Maps, the Projection of the Sphere—Algebra, the Use of the Globes, Natural and Moral Philosophy, Pneumatics, Optics, Dioptrics, Catoptrics, Hydraulics, Erostatics, Geology, Glorification, Divinity, Mythology, Medicinality, Physic, by theory only, Metaphysics practically,

Chemistry, Electricity, Galvanism, Mechanics, Antiquities, Agriculture, Ventilation, Explosion, *etc.*

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“In Classics—Grammar, Cordery, AEsop’s Fables, Erasmus’ Colloquies, Cornelius Nepos, Phaedrus, Valerius Maximus, Justin, Ovid, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Terence, Tully’s Offices, Cicero, Manouverius Turgidus, Esculapius, Rogerius, Satanus Nigrus, Quinctilian, Livy, Thomas Aquinas, Cornelius Agrippa, and Cholera Morbus.

“Greek Grammar, Greek Testament, Lucian, Homer, Sophocles, AEschylus, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and the Works of Alexander the Great; the manners, habits, customs, usages, and the meditations of the Grecians; the Greek Digamma resolved, Prosody, Composition, both in prose and verse, and Oratory, in English, Latin and Greek; together with various other branches of learning and scholastic profundity—*quoi enumerare longum est*—along with Irish Radically, and a small taste of Hebrew upon the Masoretic text.

“Matthew Kavanagh, Philomath.” (\* See note at the end of this sketch.)

Having posted this document upon the hapel-door, and in all the public places and cross roads of the parish, Mat considered himself as having done his duty. He now began to teach, and his school continued to increase to his heart’s content, every day bringing him fresh scholars. In this manner he flourished till the beginning of winter, when those boys, who, by the poverty of their parents, had been compelled to go to service to the neighboring farmers, flocked to him in numbers, quite voracious for knowledge. An addition was consequently built to the school-house, which was considerably too small; so that, as Christmas approached, it would be difficult to find a more numerous or merry establishment under the roof of a hedge school. But it is time to give an account of its interior.

The reader will then be pleased to picture to himself such a house as I have already described—in a line with the hedge; the eave of the back roof within a foot of the ground behind it; a large hole exactly in the middle of the “riggin’,” as a chimney; immediately under which is an excavation in the floor, burned away by a large fire of turf, loosely heaped together. This is surrounded by a circle of urchins, sitting on the bare earth, stones, and hassocks, and exhibiting a series of speckled shins, all radiating towards the fire, like sausages on a Poloni dish. There they are—wedged as close as they can sit; one with half a thigh off his breeches—another with half an arm off his tattered coat—a third without breeches at all, wearing, as a substitute, a piece of his mother’s old petticoat, pinned about his loins—a fourth, no coat—a fifth, with a cap on him, because he has got a scald, from having sat under the juice of fresh hung bacon—a sixth with a black eye—a seventh two rags about his heels to keep his kibes clean—an eighth crying to get home, because he has got a headache, though it may be as well to hint, that there is a drag-hunt to start from beside his father’s

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in the course of the day. In this ring, with his legs stretched in a most lordly manner, sits, upon a deal chair, Mat himself, with his hat on, basking in the enjoyment of unlimited authority. His dress consists of a black coat, considerably in want of repair, transferred to his shoulders through the means of a clothes-broker in the county-town; a white cravat, round a large stuffing, having that part which comes in contact with the chin somewhat streaked with brown—a black waistcoat, with one or two “tooth-an’-egg” metal buttons sewed on where the original had fallen off—black corduroy inexpressibles, twice dyed, and sheep’s-gray stockings. In his hand is a large, broad ruler, the emblem of his power, the woful instrument of executive justice, and the signal of terror to all within his jurisdiction. In a corner below is a pile of turf, where on entering, every boy throws his two sods, with a hitch from under his left arm. He then comes up to the master, catches his forelock with finger and thumb, and bobs down his head, by way of making him a bow, and goes to his seat. Along the walls on the ground is a series of round stones, some of them capped with a straw collar or hassock, on which the boys sit; others have bosses, and many of them hobs—a light but compact kind of boggy substance found in the mountains. On these several of them sit; the greater number of them, however, have no seats whatever, but squat themselves down, without compunction, on the hard floor. Hung about, on wooden pegs driven into the walls, are the shapeless yellow “caubeens” of such as can boast the luxury of a hat, or caps made of goat or hare’s skin, the latter having the ears of the animal rising ludicrously over the temples, or cocked out at the sides, and the scut either before or behind, according to the taste or the humor of the wearer. The floor, which is only swept every Saturday, is strewed over with tops of quills, pens, pieces of broken slate, and tattered leaves of “Reading made Easy,” or fragments of old copies. In one corner is a knot engaged at “Fox and Geese,” or the “Walls of Troy” on their slates; in another, a pair of them are “fighting bottles,” which consists in striking the bottoms together, and he whose bottle breaks first, of course, loses. Behind the master is a third set, playing “heads and points”—a game of pins. Some are more industriously employed in writing their copies, which they perform seated on the ground, with their paper on a copy-board—a piece of planed deal, the size of the copy, an appendage now nearly exploded—their cheek-bones laid within half an inch of the left side of the copy, and the eye set to guide the motion of the hand across, and to regulate the straightness of the lines and the forms of the letters. Others, again, of the more grown boys, are working their sums with becoming industry. In a dark corner are a pair of urchins thumping each other, their eyes steadily fixed on the master, lest he might happen to glance in that direction.

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Near the master himself are the larger boys, from twenty-two to fifteen—shaggy-headed slips, with loose-breasted shirts lying open about their bare chests; ragged colts, with white, dry, bristling beards upon them, that never knew a razor; strong stockings on their legs; heavy brogues, with broad, nail-paved soles; and breeches open at the knees. Nor is the establishment without a competent number of females. These were, for the most part, the daughters of wealthy farmers, who considered it necessary to their respectability, that they should not be altogether illiterate; such a circumstance being a considerable drawback, in the opinion of an admirer, from the character of a young woman for whom he was about to propose—a drawback, too, which was always weighty in proportion to her wealth or respectability.

Having given our readers an imperfect sketch of the interior of Mat's establishment, we will now proceed, however feebly, to represent him at work—with all the machinery of the system in full operation.

"Come, boys, rehearse—(buz, buz, buz)—I'll soon be after calling up the first spelling lesson—(buz, buz, buz)—then the mathematicians—book-keepers—Latinists and Grecians, successfully. (Buz, buz, buz)—Silence there below!—your pens! Tim Casey, isn't this a purty hour o' the day for you to come into school at; arraix, and what kept you, Tim? Walk up wid yourself here, till we have a confabulation together; you see I love to be talking to you.

"Sir, Larry Branagen, here; he's throwing spits at me out of his pen."—(Buz, buz, buz.)

"By my sowl, Larry, there's a rod in steep for you."

"Fly away, Jack—fly away, Jill; come again, Jack—"

"I had to go to Paddy Nowlan's for to-baccy, sir, for my father." (Weeping with his hand knowingly across his face—one eye laughing at his comrades.)—

"You lie, it wasn't."

"If you call me a liar agin, I'll give you a dig in the mug."

"It's not in your jacket."

"Isn't it?"

"Behave yourself; ha! there's the masther looking at you—ye'll get it now."—

"None at all, Tim? And she's not after sinding an excuse wid you? What's that undher your arm?"



"My Grough, sir."—(Buz, buz, buz.)

"Silence, boys. And, you blackguard Lilliputian, you, what kept you away till this?"

"One bird pickin', two men thrashin'; one bird pickin', two men thrashin'; one bird pickin'—"

"Sir, they're stickn' pins in me, here."

"Who is, Briney?"

"I don't know, sir, they're all at it."

"Boys, I'll go down to yez."

"I can't carry him, sir, he'd be too heavy for me: let Larry Toole do it, he's stronger nor me; any way, there, he's putting a corker pin in his mouth."\*—(Buz, buz, buz.)

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\* In the hedge schools it was usual for the unfortunate culprit about to be punished to avail himself of all possible stratagems that were calculated to diminish his punishment. Accordingly, when put upon another boy's back to be horsed, as it was termed, he slipped a large pin, called a corker, in his mouth, and on receiving the first blow stuck it into the neck of the boy who carried him. This caused the latter to jump and bounce about in such a manner that many of the blows directed at his burthen missed their aim. It was an understood thing, however, that the boy carrying the felon should aid him in every way in his power, by yielding, moving, and shifting about, so that it was only when he seemed to abet the master that the pin was applied to him.

"Whoo-hoo-hoo-hoo—I'll never stay away agin, sir; indeed I won't, sir. Oh, sir, clear, pardon me this wan time; and if ever you cotch me doing the like agin, I'll give you lave to welt the sowl out of me."—(Buz buz, buz.) "Behave yourself, Barny Byrne."

"I'm not touching you."

"Yes, you are; didn't you make me blot my Copy?"

"Ho, by the livin', I'll pay you goin' home for this."

"Hand me the taws."

"Whoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo—what'll I do, at all at all! Oh, sir dear, sir dear, sir dear—hoo-hoo-hoo."

"Did she send no message, good or bad, before I lay on?"

"Oh, not a word, sir, only that my father killed a pig yestherday, and he wants you to go up to-day at dinner-time."—(Buz, buz, buz.)

"It's time to get lave—it isn't, it is—it isn't, it is," etc.

"You lie, I say, your faction never was able to fight ours; didn't we lick all your dirty breed in Builagh-battha fair?"

"Silence there."—(Buz, buz, buz.)

"Will you meet us on Sathurday, and we'll fight it out clane!"

"Ha-ha-ha! Tim, but you got a big fright, any how: whist, ma bouchal, sure I was only jokin' you; and sorry I'd be to bate your father's son, Tim. Come over, and sit beside myself at the fire here. Get up, Micky Donoghue, you big, burnt-shinn'd spalpeen you, and let the dacent boy sit at the fire."



“Hulabaloo hoo-hoo-hoo—to go to give me such a welt, only for sitting at the fire, and me brought turf wid me.”

“To-day, Tim?”

“Yes, sir.”

“At dinner time, is id?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Faith, the dacent strain was always in the same family.”—(Buz, buz, buz.)—

“Horns, horns, cock horns: oh, you up’d vrid them, you lifted your fingers—that’s a mark, now—hould your face, till I blacken you!”

“Do you call thim two sods, Jack Laniran? why, ’tis only one long one broke in the middle; but you must make it up tomorrow. Jack, how is your mother’s tooth?—did she get it pulled out yet?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, tell her to come to me, and I’ll write a charm for it, that’ll cure her.—What kept you’ till now, Paddy Magouran?”



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"Couldn't come any sooner, sir."

"You couldn't, sir—and why, sir, couldn't you come any sooner', sir?"

"See, sir, what Andy Nowlan done to my copy."—(Buz, buz, buz.)—

"Silence, I'll massacre yez if yez don't make less noise."—(Buz, buz, buz.)

"I was down with Mrs. Kavanagh, sir."

"You were, Paddy—an' Paddy, ma bouchal, what war you doing there, Paddy?"

"Masther, sir, spake to Jem Kenny here; he made my nose bleed."—

"Eh, Paddy?"

"I was br ingin' her a layin' hen, sir, that my mother promised her at mass on Sunday last."

"Ah, Paddy, you're a game bird, yourself, wid your layin' hens; you're as full o' mischief as an egg's full o' mate—(omnes—ha, ha, ha, ha!)—Silence, boys—what are you laughin' at?—ha, ha, ha!—Paddy, can you spell Nebachodnazure for me?"

"No, sir."

"No, nor a better scholar, Paddy, could not do that, ma bouchal; but I'll spell it for you. Silence, boys—whist, all of yez, till I spell Nebachodnazure for Paddy Magouran. Listen; and you yourself, Paddy, are one of the letthers:

A turf and a clod spells Nebachod—  
A knife and a razure, spells Nebachodnazure—  
Three pair of boots and five pair of shoes—  
Spells Nebachodnazure, the king of the Jews.'

Now, Paddy, that's spelling Nebachodnazure by the science of Ventilation; but you'll never go that deep, Paddy."—

"I want to go out, if you plase, sir."

"Is that the way you ax me, you vagabone?"

"I want to go out, sir,"—(pulling down the fore lock.)

"Yes, that's something dacenter; by the sowl of Newton, that invinted fluxions, if ever you forgot to make a bow again, I'll nog the enthrils out of you—wait till the Pass comes in."



Then comes the spelling lesson. "Come, boys, stand up to the spelling lesson."

"Mickey," says one urchin, "show me your book, till I look at my word. I'm fifteenth."

"Wait till I see my own."

"Why do you crush for?"

"That's my place."

"No, it's not."

"Sir, spake to-----I'll tell the masther."

"What's the matther there?"

"Sir, he won't let me into my place."

"I'm before you."

"No you're not."

"I say, I am."

"You lie, pug-face: ha! I called you pug-face, tell now if you dare."

"Well boys, down with your pins in the book: who's king?"

"I am, sir."

"Who's queen?"

"Me, sir."

"Who's prince?"

"I am prince, sir."

"Tag rag and bob-tail, fall into your places."

"I've no pin, sir."

"Well down with you to the tail——now, boys."\*

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\* At the spelling lesson the children were obliged to put down each a pin, he who held the first place got them all with the exception of the queen—that is the boy who held the second place! who got two; and the prince, the third who got one. The last boy in the class was called Bobtail.

Having gone through the spelling-task, it was Mat's custom to give out six hard words selected according to his judgment—as a final test; but he did not always confine himself to that. Sometimes he would put a number of syllables arbitrarily together, forming a most heterogeneous combination of articulate sounds.

“Now, boys, here's a deep word, that'll thry yez: come Larry spell me-mo-man-dran-san-ti-fi-can-du-ban-dan-li-al-i-ty, or mis-an-thro-po-mor-phi-ta-ni-a-nus-mi-ca-li-a-lioy;—that's too hard for you, is it? Well, then, spell phthisic. Oh, that's physic you're spellin'. Now, Larry, do you know the difference between physic and phthisic?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, I'll expound it: phthisic, you see, manes—whisht, boys: will yez hould yer tongues there—phthisic, Larry, signifies—that is, phthisic—mind, it's not physic I'm expounding, but phthisic—boys, will yez stop yer noise there—signifies—but, Larry, it's so deep a word in larnin' that I should draw it out on a slate for you. And now I remimber, man alive, you're not far enough on yet to understand it: but what's physic, Larry?”

“Isn't that sir, what my father tuck the day he got sick, sir?”

“That's the very thing, Larry: it has what larned men call a medical property, and resembles little ricketty Dan Reilly there—it retrogrades. Och! Och! I'm the boy that knows things—you see now how I expounded them two hard words for yez, boys—don't yez?”

“Yes, sir,” *etc.*, *etc.*

“So, Larry, you haven't the larnin' for that either: but here's an 'asier one—spell me Ephabridotas (Epaphroditas)—you can't! hut! man—you're a big dunce, entirely, that little shoneen Sharkey there below would sack. God be wid the day when I was the likes of you—it's I that was the bright gorsoon entirely—and so sign was on it, when a great larned traveler—silence boys, till I tell yez this [a dead silence]—from Thrinity College, all the way in Dublin, happened to meet me one day—seeing the slate and Gough, you see, undher my arm, he axes me—'Arrah, Mat,' says he, 'what are you *in*?' says he. 'Faix, I'm in my breeches, for one thing,' says I, off hand—silence childhre, and don't laugh so loud—(ha, ha, ha!) So he looks closer at me: 'I see that,' says he; 'but what are you reading?' 'Nothing at all at all,' says I; 'bad manners to the taste, as you may see, if you've your eyesight.' 'I think,' says he, 'you'll be apt to die in your



breeches;’ and set spurs to a fine saddle mare he rid—faith, he did so—thought me so cute—(omnes—ha, ha, ha!) Whisht, boys, whisht; isn’t it a terrible thing that I can’t tell yez a joke, but you split your sides laughing at it—(ha, ha, ha!)—don’t laugh so loud, Barney Casey.”—(ha, ha, ha!)

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Barney.—“I want to go out, if you plase, sir.”

“Go, avick, you’ll be a good scholar yet, Barney. Faith, Barney knows whin to laugh, any how.”

“Well, Larry, you can’t spell Ephabridotas?—thin, here’s a short weeshy one, and whoever spells it will get the pins;—spell a red rogue wid three letters. You, Micky! Dan? Jack? Natty? Alick? Andy? Pettier? Jim? Tim? Pat? Body? you? you? you? Now, boys, I’ll hould you that my little Andy here, that’s only beginning the *Rational Spelling Book*, bates you all; come here, Andy, alanna: now, boys, If he bates you, you ’must all bring him a little *miscaun* of butter between two kale leaves, in the mornin’, for himself; here, Andy avourneen, spell red rogue with three letthers.”

Andy.—“M, a, t—Mat.”

“No, no, avick, that’s myself, Andy; it’s red rogue, Andy—hem!—F—.”

“F, o, x—fox.”

“That’s a man, Andy. Now boys, mind what you owe Andy in the mornin, God, won’t yez?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I will, sir.”

“And I will, sir.”

“And so will I sir,” *etc.*, *etc.*, *etc.*

I know not whether the Commissioners of Education found the monitorial system of instruction in such of the old hedge schools as maintained an obstinate resistance to the innovations of modern plans. That Bell and Lancaster deserve much credit for applying and extending the principle (speaking without any reference to its merits) I do not hesitate to grant; but it is unquestionably true, that the principle was reduced to practice in Irish hedge schools long before either of these worthy gentlemen were in existence. I do not, indeed, at present remember whether or not they claim it as a discovery, or simply as an adaptation of a practice which experience, in accidental cases, had found useful, and which they considered capable of more extensive benefit. I remember many instances, however, in which it was applied—and applied, in my opinion, though not as a permanent system, yet more judiciously than it is at present. I think it a mistake to

suppose that silence, among a number of children in school, is conducive to the improvement either of health or intellect, that the chest and the lungs are benefited by giving full play to the voice, I think will not be disputed; and that a child is capable of more intense study and abstraction in the din of a school-room, than in partial silence (if I may be permitted the word), is a fact, which I think any rational observation would establish. There is something cheering and cheerful in the noise of friendly voices about us—it is a restraint taken off the mind, and it will run the lighter for it—it produces more excitement, and puts the intellect in a better frame for study. The obligation to silence, though it may give the master more ease, imposes a new moral duty upon the child—the sense of which must necessarily weaken his application.

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Let the boy speak aloud, if he pleases—that is, to a certain pitch; let his blood circulate; let the natural secretions take place, and the physical effluvia be thrown off by a free exercise of voice and limbs: but do not keep him dumb and motionless as a statue—his blood and his intellect both in a state of stagnation, and his spirit below zero. Do not send him in quest of knowledge alone, but let him have cheerful companionship on his way; for, depend upon it, that the man who expects too much either in discipline or morals from a boy, is not in my opinion, acquainted with human nature. If an urchin titter at his own joke, or that of another—if he give him a jab of a pin under the desk, imagine not that it will do him an injury, whatever phrenologists may say concerning the organ of destructiveness. It is an exercise to the mind, and he will return to his business with greater vigor and effect. Children are not men, nor influenced by the same motives—they do not reflect, because their capacity for reflection is imperfect; so is their reason: whereas on the contrary, their faculties for education (excepting judgment, which strengthens my argument) are in greater vigor in youth than in manhood. The general neglect of this distinction is, I am convinced, a stumbling-block in the way of youthful instruction, though it characterizes all our modern systems. We should never forget that they are children; nor should we bind them by a system, whose standard is taken from the maturity of human intellect. We may bend our reason to theirs, but we cannot elevate their capacity to our own. We may produce an external appearance, sufficiently satisfactory to ourselves; but, in the meantime, it is probable that the child may be growing in hypocrisy, and settling down into the habitual practice of a fictitious character.

But another and more serious objection may be urged against the present strictness of scholastic discipline—which is, that it deprives the boy of a sense of free and independent agency. I speak this with limitations, for a master should be a monarch in his school, but by no means a tyrant; and decidedly the very worst species of tyranny is that which stretches the young mind upon the rod of too rigorous a discipline—like the despot who exacted from his subjects so many barrels of perspiration, whenever there came a long and severe frost. Do not familiarize the mind when young to the toleration of slavery, lest it prove afterwards incapable of recognizing and relishing the principle of an honest and manly independence. I have known many children, on whom a rigor of discipline, affecting the mind only (for severe corporal punishment is now almost exploded), impressed a degree of timidity almost bordering on pusillanimity. Away, then, with the specious and long-winded arguments of a false and mistaken philosophy. A child will be a child, and a boy a boy, to the conclusion of the chapter. Bell or Lancaster would not relish the pap or caudle-cup three times a day; neither would an infant on the breast feel comfortable after a gorge of ox beef. Let them, therefore, put a little of the mother's milk of human kindness and consideration into their straight-laced systems.

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A hedge schoolmaster was the general scribe of the parish, to whom all who wanted letters or petitions written, uniformly applied—and these were glorious opportunities for the pompous display of pedantry; the remuneration usually consisted of a bottle of whiskey.

A poor woman, for instance, informs Mat that she wishes to have a letter written to her son, who is a soldier abroad. “An’ how long is he gone, ma’am?”

“Och, thin, masther, he’s from me goin’ an fifteen year; an’ a comrade of his was spakin’ to Jim Dwyer, an’ says his ridgiment’s lyin’ in the Island of Budanages, somewhere in the back parts of Africa.”

“An’ is it a lotther of petition you’d be afther havin’ me to indite for you, ma’am?”

“Och, a letthur, sir—a letthur, master; an’ may the Lord grant you all kinds of luck, good, bad, an’ indifferent, both to you and yours: an’ well it’s known, by the same token, that it’s yourself has the nice hand at the pen entirely, an’ can indite a letter or petition, that the priest of the parish mightn’t be ashamed to own to it.”

“Why, thin, ’tis I that ’ud scorn to deteriorate upon the superiminance of my own execution at inditin’ wid a pen in my hand; but would you feel a delectability in my superscriptionizin’ the epistolary correspondence, ma’am, that I’m about to adopt?”

“Eagh? och, what am I sayin’!—sir—masther—sir?—the noise of the crathurs, you see, is got into my ears; and, besides, I’m a bit bothered on both sides of my head, ever since I heard that weary *weid*.”

“Silence, boys; bad manners to yez, will ye be asy, you Lilliputian Boeotians—by my hem—upon my credit, if I go down to that corner, I’ll castigate yez in dozens: I can’t spake to this dacent woman, with your insuperable turbulentiality.”

“Ah, avourneen, masther, but the larnin’s a fine thing, any how; an’ maybe ’tis yourself that hasn’t the tongue in your head, an’ can spake the tall, high-flown English; a wurrah, but your tongue hangs well, any how—the Lord increase it!”

“Lanty Cassidy, are you gettin’ on wid your Stereometry? *festina, mi discipuli; vocabo Homerum, mox atque mox*. You see, ma’am, I must tache thim to spake an’ effectuate a translation of the larned languages sometimes.”

“Arrah, masther dear, how did you get it all into your head, at all at all?”

“Silence, boys—*tace—’ conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant.*’ Silence, I say agin.”

“You could slip over, maybe, to Doran’s, masther, do you see? You’d do it betther there, I’ll engage: sure and you’d want a dhrop to steady your hand, any how.”





“Now, boys, I am goin’ to indite a small taste of literal correspondency over at the public-house here; you *literati* will hear the lessons for me, boys, till afther I’m back agin; but mind, boys, *absente domino strepuunt servi*—meditate on the philosophy of that; and, Mick Mahon, take your slate and put down all the names; and, upon my soul—hem—credit, I’ll castigate any boy guilty of *misty mannes* on my retrogradation thither;—*ergo momentote, cave ne titubes mandataque frangas*.”

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"Blood alive, masther, but that's great spakin'—begar, a judge couldn't come up to you; but in throth, sir, I'd be long sarry to throuble you; only he's away fifteen year, and I wouldn't thrust it to another; and the corplar that commands the ridgment would regard your handwrite and your inditin'."

"Don't, ma'am, plade the smallest taste of apology."

"Eagh?"

"I'm happy that I can sarve you, ma'am."

"Musha, long life to you, masther, for that same, any how—but it's yourself that's deep in the larnin' and the langridges; the Lord incrase yer knowledge—sure, an' we all want his blessin', you know."

"Home, is id? Start, boys, off—chase him, lie into him—asy, curse yez, take time gettin' out: that's it—keep to him—don't wait for me; take care, you little spalpeens, or you'll brake your bones, so you will: blow the dust of this road, I can't see my way in."

## THE RETURN.

"Well, boys, you've been at it—here's swelled faces and bloody noses. What blackened your eye, Callaghan? You're a purty prime ministher, ye boxing blackguard, you: I left you to keep pace among these factions, and you've kicked up a purty dust. What blackened your eye—eh?—"

"I'll tell you, sir, whin I come in, if you plase."

"Ho, you vagabones, this is the ould work of the faction between the Bradys and the Callaghans—bastin' one another; but, by my sowl, I'll baste you all through other. You don't want to go out, Callaghan. You had fine work here since; there's a dead silence now; but I'll pay you presently. Here, Duggan, go out wid Callaghan, and see that you bring him back in less than no time. It's not enough for your fathers and brothers to be at it, who have a right to fight, but you must battle betune you—have your field days itself!"

(Duggan returns)—"Hoo—hoo—sir, my nose. Oh, murdher sheery, my nose is broked!"

"Blow your nose, you spalpeen you—Where's Callaghan?"

"Oh, sir, bad luck to him every day he rises out of his bed; he got a stone in his fist, too, that he hot me a pelt on the nose wid, and then made off home."



“Home is id? Start, boys, off—chase him, lie into him—azy, curse yez, take time gettin out; that’s it—keep to him—don’t wait for me; take care you little salpeens or you’ll brake your bones, so you will: blow the dust of this road, I can’t see my way in it.”

“Oh! murdher, Jem, agra, my knee’s out’ o’ joint.”

“My elbow’s smashed, Paddy. Bad luck to him—the devil fly away wid him—oh! ha I ha! —oh! ha! ha! murdher—hard fortune to me, but little Mickey Geery fell, an’ thripped the mather, an’ himself’s, disabled now—his black breeches split too—look at him feelin’ them—oh! oh! ha! ha!—by tare-an’-onty, Callaghan will be murdhered, if they cotch him.”

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This was a specimen of scholastic civilization which Ireland only could furnish; nothing, indeed, could be more perfectly ludicrous than such a chase; and such scenes were by no means uncommon in hedge-schools, for, wherever severe punishment was dreaded—and, in truth, most of the hedge masters were unfeeling tyrants—the boy, if sufficiently grown to make a good race, usually broke away, and fled home at the top of his speed. The pack then were usually led on by the master, who mostly headed them himself, all in full cry, exhibiting such a scene as should be witnessed in order to be enjoyed. The neighbors, men, women, and children, ran out to be spectators; the laborers suspended their work to enjoy it, assembling on such eminences as commanded a full view of the pursuit.

“Bravo, boys—success, masther; lie into him—where’s your huntin’ horn, Mr. Kavanagh?—he’ll bate yez if ye don’t take the wind of him. Well done, Callaghan, keep up yer heart, yer sowl, and you’ll do it asy—you’re gainin’ on them, *ma bouchal*—the masther’s down, you gallows clip, an’ there’s none but the scholars afther ye—he’s safe.”

“Not he; I’ll hould a naggin, the poor scholar has him; don’t you see, he’s close at his heels?”

“*Done*, by my song—they’ll never come up wid him; listen to their leather crackers and cord-a-roys, as their knees bang agin one another. Hark forrit, boy’s; hark forrit! huz-zaw, you thieves, huzzaw!”

“Your beagles is well winded, Mr. Kava-nagh, and gives good tongue.”

“Well, masther, you had your chase for nothin’, I see.”

“Mr. Kavanagh,” another would observe, “I didn’t think you war so stiff in the hams, as to let the gorsoon bate you that way—your wind’s failin’, sir.”

The schoolmaster was abroad then, and never was the “march of intellect” at once so rapid and unsuccessful.

During the summer season, it was the usual practice for the scholars to transfer their paper, slates, and books to the green which lay immediately behind the school-house, where they stretched themselves on the grass, and resumed their business. Mat would bring out his chair, and, placing it on the shady side of the hedge, sit with his pipe in his mouth, the contented lord of his little realm, whilst nearly a hundred and fifty scholars, of all sorts and sizes, lay scattered over the grass, basking under the scorching sun in all the luxury of novelty, nakedness, and freedom. The sight was original and characteristic, and such as Lord Brougham would have been delighted with. “The schoolmaster was abroad again.”

As soon as one o'clock drew near, Mat would pull out his Ring-dial\* holding it against the sun, and declare the hour.

\* The Ring-dial was the hedge-schoolmaster's next best substitute for a watch. As it is possible that a great number of our readers may never have heard of, much less seen one, we shall in a word or two describe it—nothing could indeed be more simple. It was a bright brass ring, about three-quarters of an inch broad, and two and a half in diameter. There was a small hole in it, which when held opposite the sun admitted the light against the inside of the ring behind. On this was marked the hours and the quarters, and the time was known by observing the number or the quarter on which the slender ray that came in from the hole in front fell.

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"Now, boys, to yer dinners, and the rest to play."

"Hurroo, darlins, to play—the masther says it's dinner-time!—whip-spur-an'-away-grey—hurroo—whack—hurroo!"

"Masther, sir, my father bid me ax you home to yer dinner."

"No, he'll come to huz—come wid me if you plase, sir."

"Sir, never heed them; my mother, sir, has some of what you know—of the flitch I brought to Shoneen on last Aisther, sir."

This was a subject on which the boys gave themselves great liberty; an invitation, even when not accepted, being an indemnity for the day; it was usually followed by a battle between the claimants, and bloody noses sometimes were the issue. The master himself, after deciding to go where he was certain of getting the best dinner, generally put an end to the quarrels by a reprimand, and then gave notice to the disappointed claimants of the successive days on which he would attend at their respective houses.

"Boys, you all know my maxim; to go, for fear of any jealousies, boys, wherever I get the worst dinner; so tell me now, boys, what yer dacent mothers have all got at home for me?"

"My mother killed a fat hen yesterday, sir, and you'll have a lump of bacon and flat dutch along wid it."

"We'll have hung beef and greens, sir."

"We tried the praties this mornin', sir, and we'll have new praties, and bread and butther, sir."

"Well, it's all good, boys; but rather than show favor or affection, do you see, I'll go wid Andy, here, and take share of the hen an' bacon: but, boys, for all that, I'm fonder of the other things, you persave; and as I can't go wid you, Mat, tell your respectable mother that I'll be with her to-morrow; and with you, Larry, *ma bouchal*, the day afther."

If a master were a single man he usually went round with the scholars each night—but there were generally a few comfortable farmers, leading men in the parish, at whose house he chiefly resided; and the children of these men were treated, with the grossest and most barefaced partiality. They were altogether privileged persons, and had liberty to beat and abuse the other children of the school, who were certain of being most unmercifully flogged, if they even dared to prefer a complaint against the favorites. Indeed the instances of atrocious cruelty in hedge schools were almost incredible, and such as in the present enlightened time, would not be permitted. As to the state of the "poor, scholar," it exceeded belief; for he was friendless and unprotected. But though

legal prosecutions in those days were never resorted to, yet, according to the characteristic notions of Irish retributive justice, certain cases occurred, in which a signal, and at times, a fatal vengeance was executed on the person of the brutal master. Sometimes the brothers and other relatives of the mutilated child would come in a body to the school, and flog the pedagogue with his own taws, until his back was lapped in blood. Sometimes they would beat him until few symptoms of life remained.

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Occasionally he would get a nocturnal notice to quit the parish in a given time, under a penalty which seldom proved a dead letter in case of non-compliance. Not unfrequently did those whom he had, when boys, treated with such barbarity, go back to him, when young men, not so much for education's sake, as for the especial purpose of retaliating upon him for his former cruelty. When cases of this nature occurred, he found himself a mere cipher in his school, never daring to practise excessive severity in their presence. Instances have come to our own knowledge, of masters, who, for their mere amusement, would go out to the next hedge, cut a large branch of furze or thorn, and having first carefully arranged the children on a row round the walls of the school, their naked legs stretched out before them, would sweep round the branch, bristling with spikes and prickles, with all his force against their limbs, until, in a few minutes, a circle of blood was visible on the ground where they sat, their legs appearing as if they had been scarified. This the master did, whenever he happened to be drunk, or in a remarkably good humor. The poor children, however, were obliged to laugh loud, and enjoy it, though the tears were falling down their cheeks, in consequence of the pain he inflicted. To knock down a child with the fist, was considered nothing harsh; nor, if a boy were, cut, or prostrated by a blow of a cudgel on the head, did he ever think of representing the master's cruelty to his parents. Kicking on the shins with a point of a brogue or shoe, bound round the edge of the sole with iron nails, until the bone was laid open, was a common punishment; and as for the usual slapping, horsing, and flogging, they were inflicted with a brutality that in every case richly deserved for the tyrant, not only a peculiar whipping by the hand of the common executioner, but a separation from civilized society by transportation for life. It is a fact, however, that in consequence of the general severity practised in hedge schools, excesses of punishment did not often produce retaliation against the master; these were only exceptions, isolated cases that did not affect the general character of the discipline in such schools.

Now when we consider the total absence of all moral and religious principles in these establishments, and the positive presence of all that was wicked, cruel, and immoral, need we be surprised that occasional crimes of a dark and cruel character should be perpetrated? The truth is, that it is difficult to determine, whether unlettered ignorance itself were not preferable to the kind of education which the people then received.



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I am sorry to perceive the writings of many respectable persons on Irish topics imbued with a tinge of spurious liberality, that frequently occasions them to depart from truth. To draw the Irish character as it is, as the model of all that is generous, hospitable, and magnanimous, is in some degree fashionable; but although I am as warm an admirer of all that is really excellent and amiable in my countrymen as any man, yet I cannot, nor will I, extenuate their weak and indefensible points. That they possess the elements of a noble and exalted national character, I grant; nay, that they actually do possess such a character, under limitations, I am ready to maintain. Irishmen, setting aside their religious and political prejudices, are grateful, affectionate, honorable, faithful, generous, and even magnanimous; but under the stimulus of religious and political feeling, they are treacherous, cruel, and inhuman—will murder, burn, and exterminate, not only without compunction, but with a satanic delight worthy of a savage. Their education, indeed, was truly barbarous; they were trained and habituated to cruelty, revenge, and personal hatred, in their schools. Their knowledge was directed to evil purposes—disloyal principles were industriously insinuated into their minds by their teachers, most of whom were leaders of illegal associations. The matter placed in their hands was of a most inflammatory and pernicious nature, as regarded politics: and as far as religion and morality were concerned, nothing could be more gross or superstitious than the books which circulated among them. Eulogiums on murder, robbery, and theft were read with delight in the histories of Freney the Robber, and the Irish Rogues and Rapparees; ridicule of the Word of God, and hatred to the Protestant religion, in a book called Ward's Cantos, written in Hudi-brastic verse; the downfall of the Protestant Establishment, and the exaltation of the Romish Church, in Columbkil's Prophecy, and latterly in that of Pastorini. Gross superstitions, political and religious ballads of the vilest doggerel, miraculous legends of holy friars persecuted by Protestants, and of signal vengeance inflicted by their divine power on those who persecuted them, were in the mouths of the young and old, and of course firmly fixed in their credulity.

Their weapons of controversy were drawn from the Fifty Reasons, the Doleful Fall of Andrew Sail, the Catholic Christian, the Grounds of Catholic Doctrine, a Net for the Fishers of Men, and several other publications of the same class. The books of amusement read in these schools, including the first-mentioned in this list, were, the Seven Champions of Christendom, the Seven Wise Masters and Mistresses of Rome, Don Belianis of Greece, the Royal Fairy Tales, the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Valentine and Orson, Gesta Romanorum, Dorastus and Faunia, the History of Reynard the Fox, the Chevalier Faublax; to these I may add, the Battle of Auhrim, Siege of Londonderry,

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History of the Young Ascanius, a name by which the Pretender was designated, and the Renowned History of the Siege of Troy; the Forty Thieves, Robin Hood's Garland, the Garden of Love and Royal Flower of Fidelity, Parismus and Parismenos; along with others, the names of which shall not appear on these pages. With this specimen of education before our eyes, is it not extraordinary that the people of Ireland should be in general, so moral and civilized a people as they are?

"Thady Bradly, will you come up wid your slate, till I examine you in your figures? Go out, sir, and blow your nose first, and don't be after making a looking-glass out of the sleeve of your jacket. Now that Thady's out, I'll hould you, boys, that none of yez knows how to expound his name—eh? do ye? But I needn't ax—well, 'tis Thaddeus; and, maybe, that's as much as the priest that christened him knew. Boys, you see what it is to have the larnin'—to lade the life of a gintleman, and to be able to talk deeply wid the clergy! Now I could run down any man in arguin', except a priest; and if the Bishop was after consecratin' me, I'd have as much larnin' as some of them; but you see I'm not consecrated—and—well, 'tis no matther—I only say that the more's the pity."

"Well, Thady, when did you go into subtraction?"

"The day beyond yesterday, sir; yarra musha, sure 'twas yourself, sir, that shet me the first sum."

"Masther, sir, Thady Bradly stole my cutter—that's my cutter, Thady Bradly."

"No it's not" (in a low voice).

"Sir, that's my cutter—an' there's three nicks in id."

"Thady, is that his cutter?"

"There's your cutter for you. Sir, I found it on the flure and didn't know who own'd it."

"You know'd very well who own'd it; didn't Dick Martin see you liftin' it off o' my slate, when I was out?"

"Well, if Dick Martin saw him, it's enough: an' 'tis Dick that's the tindher-hearted boy, an' would knock, you down wid a lump of a stone, if he saw you murderin' but a fly!"

"We'll, Thady—throth Thady, I fear you'll undherstand subtraction better nor your teacher: I doubt you'll apply it to 'Practice' all your life, *ma bouchal*, and that you'll be apt to find it 'the Rule of False'\* at last. Well, Thady, from one thousand pounds, no shillings, and no pince, how will you subtract one pound? Put it down on your slate—this way,



The name of a 'Rule' in Gough's Arithmetic.

1000 00 00

1 00 00"

"I don't know how to shet about it, masther."

"You don't, an' how dare you tell me so you *shingaun* you—you Cornelius Agrippa you—go to your sate and study it, or I'll—ha! be off, you."—

"Pierce Butler, come up wid your multiplication. Pierce, multiply four hundred by two—put it down—that's it,

400

By 2"

"Twice nought is one." (Whack, whack.)

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“Take that as an illustration—is that one?”

“Faith, masther, that’s two, any how: but, sir, is not wanst nought nothin’; now masher, sure there can’t be less than nothin’.”

“Very good, sir.”

“If wanst nought be nothin’, then twice nought must be somethin’, for it’s double what wanst nought is—see how I’m sthruck for nothin’, an’ me knows it—hoo! hoo! hoo!

“Get out, you Esculapian; but I’ll give you *somethin’*, by-and-by, just to make you remimber that you know *nothin’*—off wid you to your sate, you spalpeen you—to tell me that there can’t be less than nothin’ when it’s well known that sporting Squire O’Canter’s worth a thousand pounds less than nothin’.”

“Paddy Doran, come up to your ‘Intherest.’ Well Paddy, what’s the intherest of a hundred pound, at five per cent? Boys, have manners you thieves you.”

“Do you mane, masther, per cent, per annum?”

“To be sure I do—how do you state it?”

“I’ll say, as a hundher pound is to one year, so is five per cent, per annum.”

“Hum—why what’s the number of the sum Paddy?”

“’Tis No. 84, sir. (The master steals a glance at the Key to Gough.)

“I only want to look at it in the Gough, you see, Paddy,—an’ how dare you give me such an answer, you big-headed dunce, you—go off an’ study it, you rascally Lilliputian—off wid you, and don’t let me see your ugly mug till you know it.”

“Now, gentlemen, for the Classics; and first for the Latinaarians—Larry Cassidy, come up wid your Aisop. Larry you’re a year at Latin, an’ I don’t think you know Latin for frize, what your own coat is made of, Larry. But, in the first place, Larry, do you know what a man that taiches Classics is called?”

“A schoolmasther, sir.” (Whack, whack, whack.).

“Take that for your ignorance—and that to the back of it—ha; that’ll taiche you—to call a man that taiches Classics a schoolmaster, indeed! ’Tis a Profissor of Humanity itself, he is—(whack, whack, whack,)—ha! you ringleader, you; you’re as bad as Dick M’Growler, that no masther in the county could get any good of, in regard that he put the whole school together by the ears, wherever he’d be, though the spalpeen wouldn’t stand fight

himself. Hard fortune to you! to go to put such an affront upon me, an' me a Profissor of Humanity. What's Latin for pantaloons?"

"Fern—fern—femi—"

"No, it's not, sir."

"Femora—"

"Can you do it?"

"Don't strike me, sir, don't strike me, sir, an' I will."

"I say, can you do it?"

"Femoralis,"—(whack, whack, whack,)—

"Ah, sir! ah, sir! 'tis femoralis—ah, sir! 'tis femoralis—ah, sir!"—

"This thratement to a Profissor of Humanity—(drives him head over heels to his seat). —Now, sir, maybe you'll have Latin for throwers agin, or by my sowl, if you don't, you must peel, and I'll tache you what a Profissor of Humanity is!

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“Dan Roe, you little starved-looking spalpeen, will you come up to your Elocution?—and a purty figure you cut at it, wid a voice like a penny thrumpet, Dan! Well, what speech have you got now, Dan, *ma bouchal*. Is it, ‘Romans, counthrymin, and lovers?’”

“No, shir; yarra, didn’t I spake that speech before?”

“No, you didn’t, you fairy. Ah, Dan, little as you are, you take credit for more than ever you spoke, Dan, agra; but, faith, the same thrick will come agin you some time or other, avick! Go and get that speech better; I see by your face, you haven’t it; off wid you, and get a patch upon your breeches, your little knees are through them, though ‘tisn’t by prayin’ you’ve wore them, any how, you little hop-o’-my-thumb you, wid a voice like a rat in a thrap; off wid you, man alive!”

Sometimes the neighboring gentry used to call into Mat’s establishment, moved probably by a curiosity excited by his character, and the general conduct of the school. On one occasion Squire Johnston and an English gentleman paid him rather an unexpected visit. Mat had that morning got a new scholar, the son of a dancing tailor in the neighborhood; and as it was reported that the son was nearly equal to the father in that accomplishment, Mat insisted on having a specimen of his skill. He was the more anxious on this point as it would contribute to the amusement of a travelling schoolmaster, who had paid him rather a hostile visit, which Mat, who dreaded a literary challenge, feared might occasion him some trouble.

“Come up here, you little sartor, till we get a dacent view of you. You’re a son of Ned Malone’s—aren’t you?”

“Yes, and of Mary Malone, my mother, too, sir.”

“Why, thin, that’s not so bad, any how—what’s your name?”

“Dick, sir.”

“Now, Dick, *ma bouchal*, isn’t it true that you can dance a horn-pipe?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Here, Larry Brady, take the door off the hinges, an’ lay it down on the flure, till Dick Malone dances the *Humors of Glynn*: silence, boys, not a word; but just keep lookin’ an.”

“Who’ll sing, sir? for I can’t be afther dancin’ a step widout the music.”

“Boys, which of yez’ll sing for Dick? I say, boys, will none of yez give Dick the Harmony? Well, come, Dick, I’ll sing for you myself:



“Tooral lol, lorrall lol, lorrall lol, lorrall, lol—  
Toldherol, lorrall lol, lorrall lol, lol,” *etc.*, *etc.*

“I say, Misther Kavanagh,” said the strange master, “what angle does Dick’s heel form in the second step of the treble, from the kibe on the left foot to the corner of the door forninst him?”

To this mathematical poser Mat made no reply, only sang the tune with redoubled loudness and strength, whilst little Dicky pounded the old crazy door with all his skill and alacrity. The “boys” were delighted.

“Bravo, Dick, that’s a man,—welt the flure—cut the buckle—murder the clocks—rise upon suggaun, and sink upon gad—down the flure flat, foot about—keep one foot on the ground and t’other never off it,” saluted him from all parts of the house.

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Sometimes he would receive a sly hint, in a feigned voice, to call for “Devil stick the Fiddler,” alluding to the master. Now a squeaking voice would chime in; by and by another, and so on until the master’s bass had a hundred and forty trebles, all in chorus to the same tune.

Just at this moment the two gentlemen altered; and, reader, you may conceive, but I cannot describe, the face which Mat (who sat with his back to the door, and did not see them until they were some time in the house), exhibited on the occasion. There he sung ore rotundo, throwing forth an astonishing tide of voice; whilst little Dick, a thin, pale-faced urchin, with his head, from which the hair stood erect, sunk between his hollow shoulders, was performing prodigious feats of agility.

“What’s the matter? what’s the matter?” said the gentlemen. “Good morning, Mr. Kavanagh!”

——Tooral lol, lol——

Oh, good——Oh, good morning——gintlemen, with extrame kindness,” replied Mat, rising suddenly up, but not removing his hat, although the gentlemen instantly uncovered.

“Why, thin, gintlemen,” he continued, “you have caught us in our little relaxations to-day; but—hem!—I mane to give the boys a holiday for the sake of this honest and respectable gintleman in the frize jock, who is not entirely ignorant, you persave, of litherature; and we had a small taste, gintlemen, among ourselves, of Sathurnalian licentiousness, *ut ita dicam*, in regard of—hem!—in regard of this lad here, who was dancing a hornpipe upon the door, and we, in absence of betther music, had to supply him with the harmony; but, as your honors know, gintlemen, the greatest men have bent themselves on espacial occasions.”

“Make no apology, Mr. Kavanagh; it’s very commendable in you to bend yourself by condescending to amuse your pupils.”

“I beg your pardon, Squire, I can take freedoms with you; but perhaps the concomitant gentleman, your friend here, would be pleased to take my stool. Indeed, I always use a chair, but the back of it, if I may, be permitted the use of a small portion of jocularly, was as frail as the fair sect: it went home yisterday to be mended. Do, sir, condescind to be sated. Upon my reputation, Squire, I’m sorry that I have not accommodation for you, too, sir; except one of these hassocks, which, in joint considheration with the length of your honor’s legs, would be, I anticipate, rather low; but you, sir, will honor me by taking the stool.”

By considerable importunity he forced the gentleman to comply with his courtesy; but no sooner had he fixed himself upon the seat than it overturned, and stretched him, black coat and all, across a wide concavity in the floor nearly filled up with white ashes





produced from mountain turf. In a moment he was completely white on one side, and exhibited a most laughable appearance; his hat, too, was scorched and nearly burned on the turf coals. Squire Johnston laughed heartily, so did the other schoolmaster, whilst the Englishman completely lost his temper—swearing that such another uncivilized establishment was not between the poles.

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"I solemnly supplicate upwards of fifty pardons," said Mat; "bad manners to it for a stool! but, your honor, it was my own detect of speculation, bekase, you see, it's minus a leg—a circumstance of which you weren't wi a proper capacity to take cognation, its not being personally acquainted with it. I humbly supplicate upwards of fifty pardons."

The Englishman was now nettled, and determined to wreak his ill-temper on Mat, by turning him and his establishment into ridicule.

"Isn't this, Mister ----- I forget your name, sir."

"Mat Kavanagh, at your sarvice."

"Very well, my learned friend, Mr. Mat Kevanagh, isn't this precisely what is called a hedge-school?"

"A hedge-school!" replied Mat, highly offended; "my seminary a hedge-school! No, sir; I scorn the cognomen in toto. This, sir, is a Classical and Mathematical Seminary, under the personal superintendence of your humble servant."

"Sir," replied the other master, who till then was silent, wishing, perhaps, to sack Mat in presence of the gentlemen, "it is a hedge-school; and he is no scholar, but an ignoramus, whom I'd sack in three minutes, that would be ashamed of a hedge-school."

"Ay," says Mat, changing his tone, and taking the cue from his friend, whose learning he dreaded, "it's just for argument's sake, a hedge-school; and, what is more, I scorn to be ashamed of it."

"And do you not teach occasionally under the hedge behind the house here?"

"Granted," replied Mat; "and now where's your *vis consequentiae*?"

"Yes," subjoined the other, "produce your *vis consequentiae*; but any one may know by a glance that the divil a much of it's about you."

The Englishman himself was rather at a loss for the *vis consequentiae*, and replied, "Why don't you live, and learn, and teach like civilized beings, and not assemble like wild asses—pardon me, my friend, for the simile—at least like wild colts, in such clusters behind the ditches?"

"A clusther of wild coults!" said Mat; "that shows what you are; no man of classical larnin' would use such a word. If you had stuck at the asses, we know it's a subject you're at home in—ha! ha! ha!—but you brought the joke on yourself, your honor—that is, if it is a joke—ha! ha! ha!"

“Permit me, sir,” replied the strange master, “to ax your honor one question—did you receive a classical education? Are you college-bred?”

“Yes,” replied the Englishman; “I can reply to both in the affirmative. I’m a Cantabrigian.”

“You are a what?” asked Mat.

“I am a Cantabrigian.”

“Come, sir, you must explain yourself, if you plase. I’ll take my oath that’s neither a classical nor a mathematical tarm.”

The gentleman smiled. “I was educated in the English College of Cambridge.”

“Well,” says Mat, “and may be you would be as well off if you had picked up your larnin’ in our own Thrinity; there’s good picking in Thrinity, for gentlemen like you, that are sober, and harmless about the brains, in regard of not being overly bright.”

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“You talk with contempt of a hedge-school,” replied the other master. “Did you never hear, for all so long as you war in Cambridge, of a nate little spot in Greece called the groves of Academus?”

“Inter lucos Academi quarrere verum.’

“What was Plato himself but a hedge schoolmaster? and, with humble submission, it casts no slur on an Irish tacher to be compared to him, I think. You forget also, sir, that the Dhruids taught under their oaks: eh?”

“Ay,” added Mat, “and the Tree of Knowledge, too. Faith, an’ if that same tree was now in being, if there wouldn’t be hedge schoolmasters, there would be plenty of hedge scholars, any how—particularly if the fruit was well tasted.”

“I believe, Millbank, you must give in,” said Squire Johnston. “I think you have got the worst of it.”

“Why,” said Mat, “if the gintleman’s not afther bein’ sacked clane, I’m not here.”

“Are you a mathematician?” inquired Mat’s friend, determined to follow up his victory; “do you know Mensuration?”

“Come, I do know Mensuration,” said the Englishman, with confidence.

“And how would you find the solid contents of a load of thorns?”

“Ay, or how will you consther and parse me this sintince?” said Mat—

“Ragibus et clotibus solemus stopere windous,  
Non numerus sumus et fruges consumere nati,  
Stercora flat stiro raro terra-tanfcaro bungo.”

“Aisy, Mister Kavanagh,” replied the other; “let the Cantabrigian resolve the one I propounded him first.”

“And let the Cantabrigian then take up mine,” said Mat: “and if he can expound it, I’ll give him a dozen more to bring home in his pocket, for the Cambridge folk to crack after their dinner, along wid their nuts.”

“Can you do the ‘Snail?’” inquired the stranger..

“Or ‘A and B on opposite sides of a wood,’ without the Key?” said Mat.



“Maybe,” said the stranger, who threw off the frize jock, and exhibited a muscular frame of great power, cased in an old black coat—“maybe the gintleman would like to get a small taste of the ‘*Scuffle*’”

“Not at all,” replied the Englishman; “I have not the least curiosity for it—I assure you I have not. What the deuce do they mean, Johnston? I hope you have influence over them.”

“Hand me down that cudgel, Jack Brady, till I show the gintleman the ‘Snail’ and the ‘Maypole,’” said Mat.

“Never mind, my lad; never mind, Mr -----a-----Kevanagh. I give up the contest; I resign you the palm, gentlemen. The hedge school has beaten Cambridge hollow.”

“One poser more before you go, sir,” said Mat—“Can you give me Latin for a *game-egg* in two words?”

“Eh, a game egg? No, by my honor, I cannot—gentlemen, I yield.”

“Ay, I thought so,” replied Mat; “and, faith, I believe the divil a much of the game bird about you—you bring it home to Cambridge, anyhow, and let them chew their cuds upon it, you persave; and, by the sowl of Newton, it will puzzle the whole establishment, or my name’s not Kavanagh.”

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"It will, I am convinced," replied the gentleman, eyeing the herculean frame of the strange teacher and the substantial cudgel in Mat's hand; "it will, undoubtedly. But who is this most miserable naked lad here, Mr. Kevanagh?"

"Why, sir," replied Mat, with his broad Milesian face, expanded by a forthcoming joke, "he is, sir, in a sartin and especial particularity, a namesake of your own."

"How is that, Mr. Kevanagh?"

"My name's not Kevanagh," replied Mat, "but Kavanagh; the Irish A for ever!"

"Well, but how is the lad a namesake of mine?" said the Englishman.

"Bekase, you see, he's a, poor scholar, sir," replied Mat: "an' I hope your honor will pardon me for the facetiousness—

'Quid vetat ridentem dicere verum!'

as Horace says to Maecenas, in the first of the Sathirs."

"There, Mr. Kavanagh, is the price of a suit of clothes for him."

"Michael, will you rise up, sir, and make the gintleman a bow? he has given you the price of a shoot of clothes, ma bouchal."

Michael came up with a very tattered coat hanging about him; and, catching his forelock, bobbed down his head after the usual manner, saying—"Musha yarra, long life to your honor every day you rise, an' the Lord grant your sowl a short stay in purgatory, wishin' ye, at the same time, a happy death aftherwards!"

The gentleman could not stand this, but laughed so heartily that the argument was fairly knocked up.

It appeared, however, that Squire Johnston did not visit Mat's school from mere curiosity.

"Mr. Kavanagh," said he, "I would be glad to have a little private conversation with you, and will thank you to walk down the road a little with this gentleman and me."

When the gentlemen and Mat had gone ten or fifteen yards from the school door, the Englishman heard himself congratulated in the following phrases by the scholars:—

"How do you feel afther bein' sacked, gintleman? The masther sacked you! You're a purty scholar! It's not you, Mr. Johnston, it's the other. You'll come to argue agin, will you? Where's your head, Bah! Come back till we put the *suggaun*\* about your neck.

Bah! You now must go to school to Cambridge agin, before you can argue an Irisher! Look at the figure he cuts! Why duv ye put the one foot past the other, when ye walk, for? Bah! Duncel!"

\* The suggaun was a collar of straw which was put round the necks of the dunces, who were then placed at the door, that their disgrace might be as public as possible.

"Well, boys, never heed yez for that," shouted Mat; "never fear but I'll castigate yez, ye spalpeen villains, as soon as I go back. Sir," said Mat, "I supplicate upwards of fifty pardons. I assure you, sir, I'll give them a most inordinate castigation, for their want of respectability."

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“What’s the Greek for tobaccy?” they continued—“or for Larry O’Toole? or for bletherum skate? How many beans makes five? What’s the Latin for poteen, and flummery? You a mathemathician! could you measure a snail’s horn? How does your hat stay up and nothing undher it? Will you fight Barny Parrel wid one hand tied! I’d lick you myself! What’s Greek for goster?”—with many other expressions of a similar stamp.

“Sir,” said Mat, “lave the justice of this in my hands. By the sowl of Newton, your own counthryman, ould Isaac, I’ll flog the marrow out of them.”

“You have heard, Mr. Kavanagh,” continued Mr. Johnston, as they went along, “of the burning of Moore’s stable and horses, the night before last. The fact is, that the magistrates of the county are endeavoring to get the incendiaries, and would render a service to any person capable, either directly or indirectly, of facilitating the object, or stumbling on a clew to the transaction.”

“And how could I do you a sarvice in it, sir?” inquired Mat.

“Why,” replied Mr. Johnston, “from the children. If you could sift them in an indirect way, so as, without suspicion, to ascertain the absence of a brother, or so, on that particular night, I might have it in my power to serve you, Mr. Kavanagh. There will be a large reward offered to-morrow, besides.”

“Oh, damn the penny of the reward ever I’d finger, even if I knew the whole conflagration,” said Mat; “but lave the siftin’ of the children wid myself, and if I can get anything out of them you’ll hear from me; but your honor must keep a close mouth, or you might have occasion to lend me the money for my own funeral some o’ these days. Good-morning, gintlemen.” The gentlemen departed.

“May the most ornamental kind of hard fortune pursue you every day you rise, you desavin’ villain, that would have me turn informer, bekase your brother-in-law, rack-rintin’ Moore’s stables and horses were burnt; and to crown all, make the innocent childre the means of hanging their own fathers or brothers, you rap of the divil! but I’d see you and all your breed in the flames o’ hell first.” Such was Mat’s soliloquy as he entered the school on his return.

“Now, boys, I’m afther givin’ yez to-day and to-morrow for a holyday: to-morrow we will have our Gregory;\* a fine faste, plinty of poteen, and a fiddle; and you will tell your brothers and sisters to come in the evening to the dance. You must bring plinty of bacon, hung beef, and fowls, bread and cabbage—not forgetting the phaties, and sixpence a-head for the crathur, boys, won’t yez?”



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The next day, of course, was one of festivity; every boy brought, in fact, as much provender as would serve six; but the surplus gave Mat some good dinners for three months to come. This feast was always held upon St. Gregory's day, from which circumstance it had its name. The pupils were at liberty for that day to conduct themselves as they pleased: and the consequence was, that they became generally intoxicated, and were brought home in that state to their parents. If the children of two opposite parties, chanced to be at the same school, they usually had a fight, of which the master was compelled to feign ignorance; for if he identified himself with either faction, his residence in the neighborhood would be short. In other districts, where Protestant schools were in existence, a battle-royal commonly took place between the opposite establishments, in some field lying half-way between them. This has often occurred.

Every one must necessarily be acquainted with the ceremony of *barring out*. This took place at Easter and Christmas. The master was brought or sent out on some fool's errand, the door shut and barricaded, and the pedagogue excluded, until a certain term of vacation was extorted. With this, however, the master never complied until all his efforts at forcing an entrance were found to be ineffectual; because if he succeeded in getting in, they not only had no claim to a long vacation, but were liable to be corrected. The schoolmaster had also generally the clerkship of the parish; an office, however, which in the country parts of Ireland is without any kind of salary, beyond what results from the patronage of the priest; a matter of serious moment to a teacher, who, should he incur his Reverence's displeasure, would be immediately driven out of the parish. The master, therefore, was always tyrannical and insolent to the people, in proportion as he stood high in the estimation of the priest. He was also a regular attendant at all wakes and funerals, and usually sat among a crowd of the village sages engaged in exhibiting his own learning, and in recounting the number of his religious and literary disputations.

One day, soon after the visit of the gentlemen above mentioned, two strange men came into Mat's establishment—rather, as Mat thought, in an unceremonious manner.

"Is your name Matthew Kavanagh?" said one of them.

"That is indeed the name that's upon me," said Mat, with rather an infirm voice, whilst his face got as pale as ashes.

"Well," said the fellow, "we'll just trouble you to walk with us a bit."

"How far, with submission, are yez goin' to bring me?" said Mat.

"Do you know Johnny Short's hotel?"\*

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\* The county jail.—Johnny Short was for many years the Governor of Monaghan jail. It was to him the *Mittimus* of “Fool Art,” mentioned in Phelim O’Toole’s Courtship, was directed. If the reader will suspend his curiosity, that is, provided he feels any, until he comes to the sketch just mentioned, he will get a more ample account of Johnny Short.

“My curse upon you, Findramore,” exclaimed Mat, in a paroxysm of anguish, “every day you rise! but your breath’s unlucky to a schoolmaster; and it’s no lie what was often said, that no schoolmaster ever thruv in you, but something ill came over him.”

“Don’t curse the town, man alive,” said the constable, “but curse your own ignorance and folly; any way, I wouldn’t stand in your coat for the wealth of the three kingdoms. You’ll undoubtedly swing, unless you turn king’s evidence. It’s about Moore’s business, Mr. Kavanagh.”

“Damn the bit of that I’d do, even if I knew anything about it; but, God be praised for it, I can set them all at defiance—that I’m sure of. Gentlemen, innocence is a jewel.”

“But Barny Brady, that keeps the shebeen house—you know him—is of another opinion. You and some of the Pindramore boys took a sup in Barny’s on a sartin night?”

“Ay, did we, on many a night, and will agin, plase Providence—no harm in takin’ a sup any how—by the same token, that may be you and yer friend here would have a drop of rale stuff, as a thrate from me?”

“I know a thrick worth two of that,” said the man; “I thank ye kindly, Mr. Kavanagh.”

One Tuesday morning, about six weeks after this event, the largest crowd ever remembered in that neighborhood was assembled at Findramore Hill, whereon had been erected a certain wooden machine, yclept—a gallows. A little after the hour of eleven o’clock two carts were descried winding slowly down a slope in the southern side of the town and church, which I have already mentioned, as terminating the view along the level road north of the hill. As soon as they were observed, a low, suppressed ejaculation of horror ran through the crowd, painfully perceptible to the ear—in the expression of ten thousand murmurs all blending into one deep groan—and to the eye, by a simultaneous motion that ran through the crowd like an electric shock. The place of execution was surrounded by a strong detachment of military; and the carts that conveyed the convicts were also strongly guarded.

As the prisoners approached the fatal spot, which was within sight of the place where the outrage had been perpetrated, the shrieks and lamentations of their relations and acquaintances were appalling indeed. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, cousins, and all persons to the most remote degree of kindred and acquaintanceship, were present—all excited by the alternate expression of grief and low-breathed vows of retaliation; not only relations, but all who were connected with

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them by the bonds of their desperate and illegal oaths. Every eye, in fact, coruscated with a wild and savage fire, that shot from under brows knit in a spirit that deemed to cry out Blood, vengeance—blood, vengeance! The expression was truly awful; all what rendered it more terrific was the writhing reflection, that numbers and physical force were unavailing against a comparatively small body of armed troops. This condensed the fiery impulse of the moment into an expression of subdued rage, that really shot like livid gleams from their visages.

At length the carts stopped under the gallows; and, after a short interval spent in devotional exercise, three of the culprits ascended the platform, who, after recommending themselves to God, and avowing their innocence, although the clearest possible evidence of guilt had been brought against them, were launched into another life, among the shrieks and groans of the multitude. The other three then ascended; two of them either declined, or had not strength to address the assembly. The third advanced to the edge of the boards—it was Mat. After two or three efforts to speak, in which he was unsuccessful from bodily weakness, he at length addressed them as follows:—

“My friends and good people—In hopes that you may be all able to demonstrate the last proposition laid down by a dying man, I undertake to address you before I depart to that world where Euclid, De Cartes, and many other larned men are gone before me. There is nothing in all philosophy more true than that, as the multiplication-table says, ‘two and two makes four;’ but it is equally veracious and worthy of credit, that if you do not abnegate this system that you work the common rules of your proceedings by—if you don’t become loyal men, and give up burnin’ and murdherin’, the solution of it will be found on the gallows. I acknowledge myself to be guilty, for not separatin’ myself clane from yez; we have been all guilty, and may God forgive thim that jist now departed wid a lie in their mouth.”

Here he was interrupted by a volley of execrations and curses, mingled with “stag, informer, thraithor to the thrue cause!” which, for some time, compelled him to be silent.

“You may curse,” continued Mat; “but it’s too late now to abscond the truth—the *sum* of my wickedness and folly is worked out, and you see the *answer*. God forgive me, many a young crathur I enticed into the *Ribbon* business, and now it’s to ind in *Hemp*. Obey the law; or, if you don’t you will find a *lex talionis* the construction of which is, that if a man burns or murdhers he won’t miss hanging; take warning by me—by us all; for, although I take God to witness that I was not at the perpetration of the crime that I’m to be suspended for, yet I often connived, when I might have superseded the carrying of such intuitions into effectuality. I die in pace wid all the world, save an’ except the Findramore people, whom,

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may the maledictionary execration of a dying man follow into eternal infinity! My manuscript of conic sections—" Here an extraordinary buz commenced among the crowd, which rose gradually into a shout of wild, astounding exultation. The sheriff followed the eyes of the multitude, and perceived a horseman dashing with breathless fury up towards the scene of execution. He carried and waved a white handkerchief on the end of a rod, and made signals with his hat to stop the execution. He arrived, and brought a full pardon for Mat, and a commutation of sentence to transportation for life for the other two. What became of Mat I know not; but in Findramore he never dared to appear, as certain death would have been the consequence of his not dying *game*. With respect to Barny Brady, who kept the shebeen, and was the principal evidence against those who were concerned in this outrage, he was compelled to enact an *ex tempore* death in less than a month afterwards; having been found dead, with a slip of paper in his mouth, inscribed—"This is the fate of all Informers."

\* \* \* \* \*

### (Note to page 834.)

The Author, in order to satisfy his readers that the character of Mat Kavanagh as a hedge schoolmaster is not by any means overdrawn, begs to subjoin (verbatim) the following authentic production of one, which will sufficiently explain itself, and give an excellent notion of the mortal feuds and jealousies which subsist between persons of this class:—

"To the Public.—Having read a printed Document, emanating, as it were, from a vile, mean, and ignorant miscreant of the name of -----, calumniating and vituperating me; it is evidently the production of a vain, supercilious, disappointed, frantic, purblind maniac of the name of -----, a bedlamite to all intents and purposes, a demon in the disguise of virtue, and a herald of hell in the paradise of innocence, possessing neither principle, honor, nor honesty; a vain and vapid creature whom nature plumed out for the annoyance of ----- and its vicinity.

"It is well known and appreciated by an enlightened and discerning public, that I am as competently qualified to conduct the duties of a Schoolmaster as any Teacher in Munster. (Here I pause, stimulated by dove-eyed humility, and by the fine and exalted feelings of nature, to make a few honorable exceptions, particularly when I memorize the names and immortal fame of a Mr. -----, a Mr.-----, a Mr. -----, a Mr.-----, a

Mr. -----, a Mr. -----, -----; a Mr. Matt. -----, -----; a Mr.-----, -----; and many other stars of the first magnitude, too numerous for insertion).

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“The notorious impostor and biped animal already alluded to, actuated by an overweening desire of notoriety, and in order to catch the applause of some one, grovelling in the morasses of insignificance and vice, like himself, leaves his native obscurity, and indulges in falsehood, calumny, and defamation. I am convinced that none of the highly respectable Teachers of ----- has had any participation in this scurrilous transaction, as I consider them to be sober, moral, exemplary well-conducted men, possessed of excellent literary abilities; but this expatriated ruffian and abandoned profligate, being aware of the marked and unremitting attention which I have heretofore invariably paid to the scholars committed to my care, and the astonishing proficiency which, generally speaking, will be an accompaniment of competency, instruction, assiduity and perseverance, devised this detestable and fiendish course in order to tarnish and injure my unsullied character, it being generally known and justly acknowledged that I never gave utterance to an unguarded word—that I have always conducted myself as a man of inoffensive, mild, and gentle habits, of unblemished moral character, and perfectly sensible of the importance of inculcating on the young mind, moral and religious instruction, a love of decency, cleanliness, industry, honesty, and truth—that my only predominant fault some years ago, consisted in partaking of copious libations of the ‘Moountain Dew,’ which I shall for ever mourn with heartfelt compunction.—But I return thanks to the Great God, for more than eighteen months my lips have not partaken of that infuriating beverage to which I was unfortunately attached, and my habitual propensity vanished at the sanctified and ever-memorable sign of the cross—the memento of man’s lofty destination, and miraculous injunction, of the great, illustrious, and never-to-be-forgotten Apostle of Temperance. I am now an humble member of this exemplary and excellent society, which is engaged in the glorious and hallowed cause of promoting Temperance, with the zealous solicitude of parents.—I am one of these noble men, because they are sober men, who have triumphed over their habits, conquered their passions, and put their predominant propensities to flight; yes, kind-hearted, magnanimous, and lofty high, minded conqueror, I have to announce to you that I have gained repeated victories, and consigned to oblivion the hydra-headed monster, Intemperance; and in consequence of which, have been consigned from poverty and misery, to affluence and happiness, possessing ‘ready rino,’ or ample pecuniary means to make one comfortable and happy thereby enjoying ‘the feast of reason and the flow of soul,’ *i.e.*,—an honest, cozy warm, comfortable cup of tea, to consign my drooping, sober, and cheerful spirits into the flow of soul, and philosophy of pleasure. I, therefore, do feel I hid no occasion to speak a word in vindication of my conduct and character. A conspiracy in embryo, formed by a triumvirate, was

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brought to maturity by as experienced a calumniator, as Canty, the Hangman from Cork, was in the discharge of his functions, when in the situation of municipal officer; and the hoary-headed cadman and crack-brained Pedagogue was appointed a necessary evil vehicle for industriously circulating said maniac calumny. Why did not this base Plebeian, anterior to his giving publicity to the tartaric nausea that rankled at his gloomy heart, forward the corroding philippic, and bid defiance to my contradiction? No, no; he knew full well that with his scanty stock of English ammunition scattered over the sterile floor of his literary magazine, he could not have the effrontery, impudence, or presumption to enter the list of philosophical and scientific disputation with one who has traversed the thorny paths of literature, explored its mazy windings, and who is thoroughly and radically fortified, as being encompassed with the impenetrable shield of genuine science. This red, hot, fiery, unguarded locust, in the inanity of his mind's incomprehensibleness, has not only incurred my displeasure by his satirical dogged Lampoons, *etc.*, but the abhorrence, animosity, and holy indignation of many who move in the high circle, as well as the ineffable contempt of the majority of those good and useful members of society, who are engaged in the glorious and delightful task of 'teaching the young idea how to shoot,' and forming the mind to rectitude of conduct; and whose labors are tremendous—I speak from long and considerable experience in scholastic pursuits. I am as perfectly aware as any man of the friendly intercourse, urbanity, and social reciprocation of kindness and demeanor that ought to exist among Teachers;—and, in a word, that they should be like the sun and moon—receptacles of each other's light. But these malicious, ignorant, callous-hearted traducers finding it perfectly congenial to their usual habits, and perhaps feeling no remorse of conscience in departing from those principles which must always accompany men of education, carry into effect their scheme of wanton, atrocious, and deliberate falsehood. And accordingly, in pursuance of their infernal piece of villainy, one of them being sensible of being held in contempt and ridicule by an enlightened public—whose approbation alone is the true criterion by which Teachers ought to be sanctioned, countenanced, and patronized—incited, ordered, and directed, the aforesaid Lampooner—a reckless, heartless, illiterate, evil-minded ghost, yes my friends an evil-spirit, created by the wrath of God—to pour out the rigmarole effusions of his silly and contemptible lucubrations. It is a well-known fact, that this vile calumniator is the shame, the disgrace, the opprobrium, and brand of detestation; the sacrilegious and perjured outcast of society, who would cut any man's throat for one glass of the soul-destroying beverage. This accursed viper and well-known hobgoblin, labors under a complication of maladies: at one time you might



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see him leaving the Court-house of with the awful crime of perjury depicted in capital letters on his forehead, and indelibly engraven in the recesses of his heart, considering that every tongueless object was eloquent of his woe, and at periods laboring under a semi-perspicuous, semi-opaque, gutta-serena, attended with an acute palpitation of his pericranium, and a most tormenting delirium of intellects from which he finds not the least mitigation until he consociates his optics under the influence of Morpheus. There are ties of affinity and consanguinity existing between this manufacturer of atrocious falsehoods and barefaced calumnies, and a Jack-Ass, which ties cannot be easily dissolved, the affinity or similitude is perceptible to an indifferent observer in the accent, pronunciation, modulation of the voice of the biped animal, and in the braying of the quadruped. This Jack-Ass you might also behold perambulating the streets of -----, a second Judas Iscariot—a houseless, homeless, penniless, forlorn fugitive, like Old Nick or Beelzebub, seeking whom he might betray and injure in the public estimation, in rapacity, or in discharging a blunderbuss full of falsehood against the most pure and unimpeachable Member of society! Is it not astonishing this wretched, braying, incorrigible mendicant does not put on a more firm and unalterable resolution of taking pattern by, and living in accordance with the laudable and exemplary habits of members of the Literatii, the ornament of which learned body is the Rev. Dr. King, of Ennis College, a gentleman by birth, by principles, and more than all, a gentleman by education; whose mind is pregnant with inexhaustible stores of classical and mathematical lore, entertainment and knowledge; whose learning and virtues have shed a lustre on the human kind; a gentleman possessing almost superhuman talents. No, he must persevere and run in his accustomed old course of abomination, slander, iniquity, and vice.

“In conclusion, to the R. C. Clergymen of -----, and the respectable portion of the laity, I return my ardent heartfelt thanks—to the former, who are the pious, active, and indefatigable instructors of the peasantry, their consolers in affliction, their resource in calamity, their preceptors and models in religion, the trustees of their interest, their visitors in sickness, and their companions on their beds of death; and from the latter I have experienced considerable gratitude in unison with all the other fine qualities inherent in their nature; while neither time nor place shall ever banish from my grateful I heart, their urbanity, hospitality, munificence, and kindness to me on every occasion.

“I have the honor to be their very devoted, much obliged, and grateful Servant,

“JOHN O’KELLY.



“The itinerant cosmopolite, to use his own phraseology, accuses me with being lame—I reply, so was Lord Byron; and why not a ‘Star from Dromcoloher’ be similarly honored, for

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If God, one member has oppress'd,  
He has made more perfect all the rest.

"The following poetic lines are to be inserted in reply to the doggerel composition of the equivocating and hoary champion of wilful and deliberate falsehood, and a compound of knavery, deception, villainy, and dissimulation, wherever he goes:—

"O'Kelly's my name,  
I think it no shame,  
Of sempiternal fame in that line,  
As for my being lame,  
The rest of my frame,  
Is somewhat superior to thine.

These addled head swains,  
Of paralyzed brains,  
Who charge me with corrupting youth,  
Are a perjuring pair,  
In Belzebub's chair,  
Stamped with disgrace and untruth."

We are obliged to omit some remarks that accompanied the following poetical effusion:

---

"A book to the blind signifies not a feather,  
Whose look and whose mind chime both together,  
Boreas, pray blow this vile rogue o'er the terry,  
For he is a disgrace and a scandal to Kerry."

The writer of this, after passing the highest eulogium on the Rev. Mr. O'Kelly, P.P., Kilmichael, in speaking of him, says,

"In whom, the Heavenly virtues do unite,  
Serenely fair, in glowing colors bright,  
The shivering mendicant's attire,  
The stranger's friend, the orphan's sire,  
Benevolent and mild;  
The guide of youth,  
The light of truth,  
By all condignly styl'd."

A gentleman having applied for a transcript of this interesting document for his daughter, Mr. O'Kelly says, "This transcript is given with perfect cheerfulness, at the suggestion of the amiable, accomplished, highly-gifted, original genius, Miss Margaret Brew, of -----,

to whom, with the most respectful deference, I take the liberty of applying the following most appropriate poetic lines:—

“Kilrush, a lovely spot of Erin’s Isle,  
May you and your fair ones in rapture smile,  
By force of genius and superior wit,  
Any station in high life, they’d lit.  
Raise the praise worthy, in style unknown,  
Laud her, who has great merit of her own.  
Had I the talents of the bards of yore,  
I would touch my harp and sing for ever more,  
Of Miss Brew, unrivaled, and in her youth,  
The ornament of friendship, love and truth.  
That fair one, whose matchless eloquence divine,  
Finds out the sacred pores of man sublime,  
Tells us, a female of Kilrush doth shine.  
In point of language, eloquence, and ease,  
She equals the celebrated Dowes now-a-days,  
A splendid poetess—how sweet her verse,  
That which, without a blush, Downes might rehearse;  
Her throbbing breast the home of virtue rare,  
Her bosom, warm, loving and sincere,  
A mild fair one, the muses only care,  
Of learning, sense, true wit, and talents rare;  
Endless her fame, on golden wings she’d fly,  
Loud as the trumpet of the rolling sky.

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"I avail myself of this opportunity, in the most humble posture, the pardon and indulgence of that nobleman of the most profound considerable talents, unbounded liberality, and genuine worth, Crofton M. Yandeleur, Esq., for the culpable omission, which I have incautiously and inadvertently made, in not prior to, and before all, tendered his honor, my warm hearted and best acknowledgments, and participating in the general joy, visible here on every countenance, occasioned by the restoration to excellent health, which his most humane, truly charitable, and illustrious beloved patroness of virtue and morality, Lady Grace T. Yandeleur, now enjoys May they very late, when they see their children, as well as their numerous, happy and contented tenantry, flourish around them in prosperity, virtue, honor, and independence—may they then resign their temporal care, to partake of the never-ending joys, glory, and felicity of Heaven; these are the fervent wishes and ardent prayers of their ever grateful servant,

"JOHN O'KELLY.

"O rouse my muse and launch in praise forth,  
Dwell with delight, with extasy on worth;  
In these kind souls in conspicuous flows,  
Their liberal hands expelling-human woes.  
Tell, when dire want oppressed the needy poor,  
They drove the ghastly spectre from the door.  
Such noble actions yield more pure content,  
Than thousands squander'd or in banquets spent.

"I hope, kind and extremely patient reader, you will find my piece humorous, interesting, instructive, and edifying. In delineating and drawing to life the representation of my assailant, aggressor, and barefaced calumniator. I have preferred the natural order, free, and familiar style, to the artificial order, grave, solemn, and antiquated style; and in so doing, I have had occasion to have reference to the vocal metaphor of some words. With a due circumspection of the use of their synonymy, taking care that the import and acceptance of each phrase and word should not appear frequently synonymous. Again. I have applied the whip unsparingly to his back, and have given him such a laudable castigation, as to compel him to comport himself in future with propriety and politeness; yes, it is quite obvious that I have done it, by an appropriate selection of catagoromatic and cencatogoromatic terms and words. I have been particularly careful to adorn it with some poetic spontaneous effusions, and although I own to you, that I have no pretensions to be an adept in poetry, as I have only moderately sipped of the Helicon Fountain; yet from my knowledge of Orthometry I can prove the correctness of it; by special and general metric analysis. In conclusion, I have not indulged in Rhetorical figures and Tropes, but have rigidly adhered to the use of figurative and literal language; finally I have used a concatenation of appropriate mellifluous epithets, logically and philosophically accurate, copious, sublime, eloquent, and harmonious.

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“Adieu! Adieu! Remember, JOHN O’KELLY, Literary Teacher, And a native of Dromcoloher.”

“The author of this extempore production of writing a Treatise on Mental Calculations, to which are appended more than three hundred scientific, ingenious, and miscellaneous questions, with their solutions.

“Mental calculations for the first time are simplified, which will prove a grand desideratum and of the greatest importance in mercantile affairs.

“You will not wonder when I will ye,  
You have read some pieces from O’ Kelly;  
Halt he does, but ’tis no more  
Than Lord Byron did before;  
Read his pieces and you’ll find  
There is no limping in his mind;  
Reader, give your kind subscription,  
Of you, he will give a grand description.

Price 2s., to be paid in advance,

“There are Sixty-eight Subscribers to the forthcoming work, gentlemen of considerable Talents, Liberality, and worth;—who, with perfect cheerfulness, have evinced a most laudable disposition to foster, encourage, and reward, a specimen of Irish Manufacture and Native Talent, in so humble a person as their extremely grateful, much obliged, and faithful servant,

“JOHN O’KELLY.”

## THE MIDNIGHT MASS.

Frank M’Kenna was a snug farmer, frugal and industrious in his habits, and, what is rare amongst most men of his class, addicted to neither drink nor quarrelling. He lived at the skirt of a mountain, which ran up in long successive undulations, until it ended in a dark, abrupt peak, very perpendicular on one side, and always, except on a bright day, capped with clouds. Before his door lay a hard plain, covered only with a kind of bent, and studded with round gray rocks, protruding somewhat above its surface. Through this plain, over a craggy channel, ran a mountain torrent, that issued to the right of M’Kenna’s house, from a rocky and precipitous valley which twisted itself round the base of the mountain until it reached the perpendicular side, where the peak actually overhung it. On looking either from the bottom of the valley or the top of the peak, the depth appeared immense; and, on a summer’s day, when the black thorns and other hardy shrubs that in some places clothed its rocky sides were green, to view the river



sparkling below you in the sun, as it flung itself over two or three cataracts of great depth and boldness, filled the mind with those undefinable sensations of pleasure inseparable from a contemplation of the sublimities of nature. Nor did it possess less interest when beheld in the winter storm. Well do we remember, though then ignorant of our own motives, when we have, in the turmoil of the elements, climbed its steep, shaggy sides, disappearing like a speck, or something not of earth, among the dark clouds that rolled over its summit, for no other purpose than to stand upon

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its brow, and look down on the red torrent, dashing with impetuosity from crag to crag, whilst the winds roared, and the clouds flew in dark columns around us, giving to the natural wildness of the place an air of wilder desolation.—Beyond this glen the mountains stretched away for eight or ten miles in swelling masses, between which lay many extensive sweeps, well sheltered and abundantly stocked with game, particularly with hares and grouse. M’Kenna’s house stood, as I said, at the foot of this mountain, just where the yellow surface of the plain began to darken into the deeper hues of the heath; to the left lay a considerable tract of stony land in a state of cultivation; and beyond the river, exactly opposite the house, rose a long line of hills, studded with houses, and in summer diversified with pasture and corn fields, the beauty of which was heightened by the columns of smoke that slanted across the hills, as the breeze carried them through the lucid haze of the atmosphere.

M’Kenna’s family consisted of himself, his wife, two daughters, and two sons. One of these was a young man addicted to drink, idle, ill-tempered, and disobedient; seldom taking a part in the labors of the family, but altogether devoted to field sports, fairs, markets, and dances. In many parts of Ireland it is usual to play at cards for mutton, loaves, fowls, or whiskey, and he was seldom absent from such gambling parties, if held within a reasonable distance. Often had the other members of the family remonstrated with him on his idle and immoral courses; but their remonstrances only excited his bad passions, and produced, on his part, angry and exasperating language, or open determination to abandon the family altogether and enlist. For some years he went on in this way, a hardened, ungodly profligate, spurning the voice of reproof and of conscience, and insensible to the entreaties of domestic affection, or the commands of parental authority. Such was his state of mind and mode of life when our story opens.

At the time in which the incidents contained in this sketch took place, the peasantry of Ireland, being less encumbered with heavy rents, and more buoyant in spirits than the decay of national prosperity has of late permitted them to be, indulged more frequently, and to a greater stretch, in those rural sports and festivities so suitable to their natural love of humor and amusement. Dances, wakes, and weddings, were then held according to the most extravagant forms of ancient usage; the people were easier in their circumstances, and consequently indulged in them with lighter hearts, and a stronger relish for enjoyment. When any of the great festivals of their religion approached, the popular mind, unrepressed by poverty and national dissension, gradually elevated itself to a species of wild and reckless mirth, productive of incidents irresistibly ludicrous, and remarkably characteristic of Irish manners. It is not, however, to be expected, that a people whose love of fighting is so innate a principle in their disposition, should celebrate these festive seasons without an occasional crime, which threw its deep shadow over the mirthful character of their customs. Many such occurred; but they were looked upon then with a degree of horror and detestation of which we can form but a very inadequate idea at present.

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It was upon the advent of one of those festivals—Christmas—which the family of M’Kenna, like every other family in the neighborhood, were making preparations to celebrate with the usual hilarity. They cleared out their barn in order to have a dance on Christmas-eve; and for this purpose, the two sons and the servant-man wrought with that kind of industry produced by the cheerful prospect of some happy event. For a week or fortnight before the evening on which the dance was appointed to be held, due notice of it had been given to the neighbors, and, of course, there was no doubt but that it would be numerously attended.

Christmas-eve, as the day preceding Christmas is called, has been always a day of great preparation and bustle. Indeed the whole week previous to it is also remarkable, as exhibiting the importance attached by the people to those occasions on which they can give a loose to their love of fun and frolic. The farm-house undergoes a thorough cleansing. Father and sons are, or rather used to be, all engaged in repairing the out-houses, patching them with thatch where it was wanted, mending mangers, paving stable-floors, fixing cow-stakes, making boraghs,\* removing nuisances, and cleaning streets.

\* The rope with which a cow is tied in the cowhouse.

On the ether hand, the mother, daughters and maids, were also engaged in their several departments; the latter scouring the furniture with sand: the mother making culinary preparations, baking bread, killing fowls, or salting meat; whilst the daughters were unusually intent upon the decoration of their own dress, and the making up of the family linen. All, however, was performed with an air of gayety and pleasure; the ivy and holly were disposed about the dressers and collar beams with great glee; the chimneys were swept amidst songs and laughter; many bad voices, and some good ones, were put in requisition; whilst several who had never been known to chaunt a stave, alarmed the listeners by the grotesque and incomprehensible nature of their melody. Those who were inclined to devotion—and there is no lack of it in Ireland—took to carols and hymns, which they sang, for want of better airs, to tunes highly comic. We have ourselves often heard the Doxology sung in Irish verse to the facetious air of “Paudeen O’Rafferty,” and other hymns to the tune of “Peas upon a Trencher,” and “Cruskeen Lawn.” Sometimes, on the contrary, many of them, from the very fulness of jollity, would become pathetic, and indulge in those touching old airs of their country, which maybe truly, called songs of sorrow, from the exquisite and simple pathos with which they abound. This, though it may seem anomalous, is but natural; for there is nothing so apt to recall to the heart those friends, whether absent or dead, with whom it has been connected, as a stated festival. Affection is then awakened, and summons to the hearth where it presides those on whose face it loves to look;



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if they be living, it places them in the circle of happiness which surrounds it; and if they be removed forever from such scenes, their memory, which, amidst the din of ordinary life, has almost passed away, is now restored, and their loss felt as if it had been only just then sustained. For this reason, at such times, it is not at all unusual to see the elders of Irish families touched by pathos as well as humor. The Irish are a people whose affections are as strong as their imaginations are vivid; and, in illustration of this, we may add, that many a time have we seen them raised to mirth and melted into tears almost at the same time, by a song of the most comic character. The mirth, however, was for the song, and the sorrow for the memory of some beloved relation who had been remarkable for singing it, or with whom it had been a favorite.

We do not affirm that in the family of the M'Kennas there were, upon the occasion which we were describing, any tears shed. The enjoyments of the season and the humors of the expected dance, both combined to give them a more than usual degree of mirth and frolic. At an early hour all that was necessary for the due celebration of that night and the succeeding day, had been arranged and completed. The whiskey had been laid in, the Christmas candles bought, the barn cleared out, the seats laid; in short, every thing in its place, and a place for everything. About one o'clock, however, the young members of the family began to betray some symptoms of uneasiness; nor was M'Kenna himself, though the *farithe* or man of the house, altogether so exempt from what they felt, as might, if the cause of it were known to our readers, be expected from a man of his years and experience.

From time to time one of the girls tripped out as far as the stile before the door, where she stood looking in a particular direction until her sight was fatigued.

"Och, 'och," her mother exclaimed during her absence, "but that colleen's sick about Barny!—musha, but it would be the beautiful joke, all out, if he'd disappoint the whole of yez. Faix, it wouldn't be unlike the same man, to go wherever he can make most money; and sure small blame to him for that; what's one place to him more than another?"

"Hut," M'Kenna replied, rising, however, to go out himself, "the girsha's makin' a *bauliore* (\* laughing stock) of herself."

"An' where's yourself slippin' out to?" rejoined his wife, with a wink of shrewd humor at the rest. "I say, Frank, are you goin' to look for him too? Mavrone, but that's sinsible! Why, thin, you snakin' ould rogue, is that the way wid you? Throth I have often hard it said, that 'one fool makes many,' but sure enough, 'an ould fools worse nor any.' Come in here this minute, I say—walk back—you to have your horn up! Faix, indeed!"

“Why! I am only goin’ to get the small phaties boiled for the pigs, poor crathurs, for their Christmas dinner. Sure we oughn’t to neglect thim no more than ourselves, the crathurs, that can’t spake their wants, except by grantin’.”

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“Saints above!—the Lord forgive me for bringin’ down their names upon a Christmas Eve, but it’s beside himself the man is! an’ him knows that the phaties wor boiled an’ made up into balls for them airly this mornin’!”

In the meantime, the wife’s good-natured attack upon her husband produced considerable mirth in the family. In consequence of what she said, he hesitated: but ultimately was proceeding towards the door, when the daughter returned, her brow flushed, and her eye sparkling with mirth and delight.

“Ha!” said the father, with a complacent smile, “all’s right, Peggy, you seen him, alanna. The music’s in your eye, acushla; an’ the’ feet of you can’t keep themselves off o’ the ground; an’ all bekase you seen Barney Dhal (\* blind Barney) pokin’ across the fields, wid his head up, an’ his skirt stickn’ out behind him wid Granua Waile.” (\* The name of his fiddle)

The father had conjectured properly, for the joy which animated the girl’s countenance could not be misunderstood.

“Barney’s comin’,” she exclaimed, clapping her hands with great glee, “an’ our Frank wid him; they’re at the river, and Frank has him on his back, and Granua Waile undhor his arm! Come out, come out! You’ll die for good, lookin’ at them staggerin’ across. I knew he’d come! I knew it! and be good to thim that invinted Christmas; it’s a brave time, faix!”

In a moment the inmates were grouped before the door, all anxious to catch a glimpse of Barney and Granua Waile.

“Faix ay! Sure enough.. Sarra doubt if it! Wethen, I’d never mistrust Barney!” might be heard in distinct exclamations from each.

“Faith he’s a Trojan,” said the *farithe*, an’ must get lashins of the best we have. Come in, childher, an’ red the hob for him.

“Och, Christmas comes but wanst a year,  
An’ Christmas comes but wanst a year;  
An’ the divil a mouth  
Shall be friends wid drouth,  
While I have whiskey, ale, or beer.

Och, Christmas comes but wanst a year,  
An’ Christmas comes but waust a year;  
Wid han’ in han’,  
An’ can to can,  
Then Hi for the whiskey, ale, and beer.



Och, Christmas comes but wanst a year,  
An' Christmas comes but wanst a year;  
Then the high and the low  
Shall shake their toe,  
When primed wid whiskey, ale, an' beer.'

For all that, the sorra fig I care for either ale or beer, barrin' in regard of mere drouth;  
give me the whiskey, Eh, Alley—won't we have a jorum any how?"

"Why, thin," replied the wife, "the devil be from me (the crass about us for namin' him)  
but you're a greater *Brinoge* than some of your childher! I suppose its your capers  
Frank has in him. Will you behave yourself, you old slingpoke? Behave, I say, an let  
me go. Childher, will you help me to flake this man out o' the place? Look at him, here,  
caperin' an' crackin' his fingers afore me, an' pullin' me out to dance!"

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“Och, och, murdher alive,” exclaimed the good man out of breath, “I seen the day, any way! An’, maybe, could show a step or two yet, if I was well fixed. You can’t forget ould times, Alley? Eh, you thief?”

“Musha, have sinse, man alive,” replied the wife, in a tone of placid gravity, which only betrayed the pleasure she herself felt in his happiness. “Have sinse, an’ the strange man comin’ in, an’ don’t let him see you in such figaries.”

The observation of the good woman produced a loud laugh among them. “Arrah what are yez laughing at?” she inquired.

“Why, mother,” said one of her daughters “how could Barney *Dhal*, a blind man, see anybody?”

Alley herself laughed at her blunder, but wittily replied, “Faith, avourneen, maybe he can often see as nately through his ear as you could do wid your eyes open; sure they say he can hear the grass growin’.”

“For that matther,” observed the farithee, joining in the joke, “he can see as far as any of us—while we’re asleep.”

The conversation was thus proceeding, when Barney *Dhal* and young Frank M’Kenna entered the kitchen.

In a moment all hands were extended to welcome Barney: “*Millia failte ghud*, Barney!” “*Cead millia failte ghud*, Barney!” “Oh, Barney, did you come at last? You’re welcome.” “Barney, my Trojan, how is every cart-load of you?” “How is Granua Waile, Barney?”

“Why, thin, holy music, did you never see Barney *Dhal* afore? Clear off from about me, or, by the sweets of rosin, I’ll play the devil an’ brake things. ‘You’re welcome, Barney!’—an’ ‘How are you, Barney?’ Why thin, piper o’ Moses, don’t I know I’m welcome, an’ yit you must be tellin’ me what everybody knows! But sure I have great news for you all!”

“What is that, Barney?”

“Well, but can yez keep a sacret? Can yez, girls?”

“Faix can we, Barney, achora.”

“Well, so can I—ha, ha, ha! Now, are, yez sarved? Come, let me to the hob.”

“Here, Barney; I’ll lead you, Barney.”

“No, I *have* him; come, Barny, I’ll lead you: here, achora, this is the spot—that’s it. Why, Barny,” said the arch girl, as she placed him in the corner, “sorra one o’ the hob but knows you: it never stirs—ha, ha, ha!”

“Throth, a colleen, that tongue o’ yours will delude some one afore long, if it hasn’t done so already.”

“But how is Granua Waile, Barny?”

“Poor Granua is it? Faith, times is hard wid her often. ‘Granua,’ says I to her ‘what do you say, acushla? we’re axed to go to two or three places to-day—what do you say? Do you lead, an’ I’ll follow: your will is my pleasure.’ ‘An’ where are we axed to?’ says Granua, sinsible enough. ‘Why,’ says I, ‘to Paddy Lanigan’s, to Mike Hartigan’s, to Jack Lynch’s, an’ at the heel o’ the hunt, to Frank M’Kenna’s, of the Mountain Bar.’ ‘By my song,’ says she, ‘you may go where you plase; as for me, I’m

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off to Frank M’Kenna’s, one of the dacentest men in Europe, an’ his wife the same. Divil a toe I’ll set a waggin’ in any other place this night,’ says she; ‘for ’tis there we’re both well thrated wid the best the house can afford. So,’ says she, ‘in the name of all that’s musical, you’re welcome to the poker an’ tongs anywhere else; for me, I’m off to Frank’s.’ An’ faith, sure enough, she took to her pumps; an’ it was only comin’ over the hill there, that young Frank an’ I overtuck her: divil a lie in it.”

In fact, Barney, besides being a fiddler, was a senachie of the first water; could tell a story, or trace a genealogy as well as any man living, and draw the long bow in either capacity much better than he could in the practice of his more legitimate profession.

“Well, here she is, Barny, to the fore,” said the aforesaid arch girl, “an’ now give us a tune.”

“What!” replied the farithee, “is it wid-out either aitin’ or dhrinkin’? Why, the girsha’s beside herself! Alley, aroon, get him the linin’\* an’ a sup to tighten his elbow.”

\* Linin’—lining, so eating and drinking are often humorously termed by the people.

The good woman instantly went to provide refreshments for the musician.

“Come, girls,” said Barny, “will yez get me a scythe or a handsaw.”

“A scythe or a handsaw! eh, then what to do, Barny?”

“Why, to pare my nails, to be sure,” replied Barny, with a loud laugh; “but stay—come back here—I’ll make shift to do wid a pair of scissors this bout.

“The parent finds his sons,  
The tutherer whips them;  
The nailer makes his nails,  
The fiddler clips them.”

Wherever Barny came there was mirth, and a disposition to be pleased, so that his jokes always told.

“Musha, the sorra *pare* you, Barny,” said one of the girls; “but there’s no bein’ up to you, good or bad.”

“The sorra *pair* me, is it? faix, Nancy, you’ll soon be paired yourself wid some one, avourneen. Do you know a sartin young man wid a nose on him runnin’ to a point like the pin of a sun-dial, his knees brakin’ the king’s pace, strikin’ one another ever since he

was able to walk, an' that was about four years afther he could say his Father Nosther; an' faith, whatever you may think, there's no makin' them paceable except by puttin' between them! The wrong side of his shin, too, is foremost; an' though the one-half of his two feet is all heels, he keeps the same heels for set days an' bonfire nights, an' savinly walks on his ankles. His leg, too, Nancy, is stuck in the middle of his foot, like a poker in a pick-axe; an', along wid all—"

"Here, Barny, thry your hand at this," said the good woman, who had not heard his ludicrous description of her fictitious son-in-law—"eeh *arran agus bee laudher*, Barny, *ate bread and be strong*. I'll warrant when you begin to play, they'll give you little time to do anything but scrape away;—taste the dhrink first, anyway, in the name o' God,"—and she filled him a glass.



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“Augh, augh! faith you’re the moral of a woman. Are you there, Frank M’Kenna?—here’s a sudden disholution to your family! May they be scattered wid all speed—manin’ the girls—to all corners o’ the parish!—ha, ha, ha! Well, that won’t vex them, anyhow; an’ next, here’s a merry Chris’mas to us, an’ many o’ them! Whooh! blur-an’-age! whooh! oh, by gorra!—that’s—that’s—Frank run afther my breath—I’ve lost it—run, you tory: oh, by gor, that’s stuff as sthrong as Sampson, so it is. Arrah, what well do you dhraw that from? for, faith, ’twould be mighty convanient to live near it in a hard frost.”

Barney was now silent for some time, which silence was produced by the industry he displayed in assailing the substantial refreshments before him. When he had concluded his repast he once more tasted the liquor; after which he got Granua Waile, and continued playing their favorite tunes, and amusing them with anecdotes, both true and false, until the hour drew nigh when his services were expected by the young men and maidens who had assembled to dance in the barn. Occasionally, however, they took a preliminary step in which they were joined by few of their neighbors. Old Frank himself felt his spirits elevated by contemplating the happiness of his children and their young associates.

“Frank,” said he, to the youngest of his sons, “go down to Owen Reillaghan’s, and tell him an’ his family to come up to the dance early in the evenin’. Owen’s a pleasant man,” he added, “and a good neighbor, but a small thought too strict in his duties. Tell him to come up, Frank, airly, I say; he’ll have time enough to go to the Midnight Mass afther dancin’ the ‘Rakes of Ballyshanny,’ and ‘the Baltihorum jig;’ an’ maybe he can’t do both in style!”

“Ay,” said Frank, in a jeering manner, “he carries a handy heel at the dancin’, and a soople tongue at the prayin’; but let him alone for bringin’ the bottom of his glass and his eyebrow acquainted. But if he’d pray less—”

“Go along, a *veehonce*, (\* you profligate) an’ bring him up,” replied the father: “you to talk about prayin’! Them that ’ud catch you at a prayer ought to be showed for the world to wondher at: a man wid two heads an him would be a fool to him. Go along, I say, and do what you’re bid.”

“I’m goin’,” said Frank. “I’m off; but what if he doesn’t come? I’ll then have my journey for nothin’.”

“An’ it’s good payment for any journey ever you’ll make, barrin’ it’s to the gallows,” replied the father, nearly provoked at his reluctance in obeying him: “won’t you have dancin’ enough in the coorse o’ the night, for you’ll not go to the Midnight Mass, and why don’t you be off wid you at wanst?”

Frank shrugged his shoulders two or three times, being loth to leave the music and dancing; but on seeing his father about to address him in sharper language, he went out with a frown on his brows, and a half-smothered imprecation bursting from his lips.

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He had not proceeded more than a few yards from the door, when he met Rody Teague, his father's servant, on his way to the kitchen. "Rody," said he, "isn't this a purty business? My father wantin' to send me down to Owen Reillaghan's; when, by the vartue o' my oath, I'd as soon go half way into hell, as to any place where his son, Mike Reillaghan, 'ud be. How will I manage, Rody?"

"Why," replied Rody, "as to meetin' wid Mike, take my advice and avoid him. And what is more I'd give up Peggy Gartland for good. Isn't it a mane thing for you, Frank, to be hangin' afther a girl that's fonder of another than she is of yourself. By this and by that, I'd no more do it—avvough! catch me at it—I'd have spunk in me."

Frank's brow darkened as Rody spoke; instead of instantly replying, he was silent and appeared to be debating some point in his own mind, on which he had not come to a determination.

"My father didn't hear of the fight between Mike and me?" said he, interrogatively—"do you think he did, Rody?"

"Not to my knowledge," replied the servant; "if he did, he wouldn't surely send you down; but talking of the fight, you are known to be a stout, well-fought boy—no doubt of that—still, I say, you had no right to provoke Mike as you did, who, it's well known, could bate any two men in the parish; and so sign, you got yourself dacently trounced, about a girl that doesn't love a bone in your skin."

"He disgraced me, Rody," observed Frank—"I can't rise my head; and you know I was thought, by all the parish, as good a man as him. No, I wouldn't, this blessed Christmas Eve above us, for all that ever my name was worth, be disgraced by him as I am. But—hould, man—have patience!"

"Throth and, Frank, that's what you never had," said Eody; "and as to bein' disgraced, you disgraced yourself. What right had you to challenge the boy to fight, and to strike him into the bargain, bekase Peggy Gartland danced with him, and wouldn't go out wid you? Death alive, sure that wasn't his fault."

Every word of reproof which proceeded from Rody's lips but strengthened Frank's rage, and added to his sense of shame; he looked first in the direction of Reillaghan's house, and immediately towards the little village in which Peggy Gartland lived.

"Rody," said he, slapping him fiercely on the shoulder, "go in—I've—I've made up my mind upon what I'll do; go in, Eody, and get your dinner; but don't be out of the way when I come back."

"And what have you made up your mind to?" inquired Eody.

"Why, by the sacred Mother o' Heaven, Rody, to—to—be friends wid Mike."

“Ay, there’s sinse and rason in that,” replied Eody; “and if you’d take my advice you’d give up Peggy Gartland, too.”

“I’ll see you when I come back, Eody; don’t be from about the place.”

And as he spoke, a single spring brought him over the stile at which they held the foregoing conversation.

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On advancing, he found himself in one of his father's fields, under the shelter of an elder-hedge. Here he paused, and seemed still somewhat uncertain as to the direction in which he should proceed. At length he decided; the way towards Peggy Gartland's was that which he took, and as he walked rapidly, he soon found himself at the village in which she lived.

It was now a little after twilight; the night was clear the moon being in her first quarter, and the clouds through which she appeared to struggle, were light and fleecy, but rather cold-looking, such, in short, as would seem to promise a sudden fall of snow. Frank had passed the two first cabins of the village, and was in the act of parrying the attacks of some yelping cur that assailed him, when he received a slap on the back, accompanied by a *gho manhi Dhea gliud, a Franchas, co wul thu guilh a nish, a rogora duh?*\*

\* God save you, Frank! where are you going now, you black rogue?

"Who's this?" exclaimed Frank: "eh! why, Darby More, you sullin' thief o' the world, is this you?"

"Ay, indeed; an' you're goin' down to Peggy's?" said the the other, pointing significantly towards Peggy Gartland's house. "Well, man, what's the harm? She may get worse, that is, hopin' still that you'll mend your manners, a bouchal: but isn't your nose out o' joint there, Frank, darlin'?"

"No sich thing at all, Darby," replied Frank, gulping down his indignation, which rose afresh on hearing that the terms on which he stood with Peggy were so notorious.

"Throth but it is," said Darby, "an' to tell the blessed thruth, I'm not sarry that it's out o' joint; for when I tould you to lave the case in my hands, along wid a small thrifle o' silver that didn't signify much to you—whoo! not at all: you'd rather play it at cards, or dhrink it, or spind it wid no good. Out o' joint! nrasha, if ever a man's nose was to be pitied, and yours is: why, didn't Mike Reillaghan put it out o' joint, twist? first in regard to Peggy, and secondly by the batin' he gave you an it."

"It's well known, Darby," replied Frank, "that 'twas by a chance blow he did it; and, you know, a chance blow might kill the devil."

"But there was no danger of Mike's gettin' the chance blow," observed the sarcastic vagrant, for such he was.

"Maybe it's afore him," replied his companion: "we'll have another thrial for it, any how; but where are you goin', Darby? Is it to the dance?"

Me! Is it a man "wid two holy ordhers an him"? No, no! I might go up, may be, as far as your father's, merely to see the family, only for the night that's in it; but I'm goin' to

another frind's place to spind my Chris'mas, an' over an' above, I must go to the Midnight Mass. Frank, change your coorses, an' mend your life, an' don't be the talk o' the parish. Remimber me to the family, an' say I'll see them soon."

\* The religious orders, as they are termed, most commonly entered into by the peasantry, are those of the Scapular and St. Francis. The order of Jesus—or that of the Jesuits, is only entered into by the clergy and the higher lay classes.

"How long will you stop in the neighborhood?" inquired Frank.

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"Arrah why, acushla?" replied the mendicant, softening his language.

"I might be wantin to see you some o' these days," said the other: "indeed, it's not unlikely, Darby; so don't go, any how, widout seein' me."

"Ah!" said Darby, "had you taken a fool's advice—but it can't be helped now—the harm's done, I doubt; how-an'-ever, for the matther o' that, may be I have as good as Peggy in my eye for you; by the same token, as the night's could, warm your tooth, avick; there's waker wather nor this in Lough Mecall. Sorra sup of it over I keep for my own use at all, barrin' when I take a touch o' configuration in my bowels, or, may be, when I'm too long at my prayers; for, God help me, sure I'm but sthrivin', wid the help o' one thing an' another, to work out my salvation as well as I can! Your health, any how, an' a merry Chris'mas to you!—not forgettin' myself," he added, putting to his lips a large cow's horn, which he kept slung beneath his arm, like the bugle of a coach-guard, only that this was generally concealed by an outside coat, no two inches of which were of the same materials of color. Having taken a tolerably large draught from this, which, by the "way, held near two quarts, he handed it with a smack and a shrug to Frank, who immediately gave it a wipe with the skirt of his coat, and pledged his companion.

"I'll be wantin'," observed Frank, "to see you in the hollydays—faith, that stuff's to be christened yet, Darby—so don't go till we have a dish o' discoorse about somethin' I'll mintion to you. As for Peggy Gartland, I'm done wid her; she may marry ould Nick for me."

"Or you for ould Nick," said the cynic, "which would be nearly the same thing: but go an, avick, an' never heed me; sure I must have my spake—doesn't every body know Darby More?"

"I've nothin' else to say now," added Frank, "and you have my authority to spread it as far as you plase. I'm done wid her: so good-night, an' good *cuttin'* (\* May what's in it never fail) to your horn, Darby!—You damn ould villian!" he subjoined in a low voice, when Darby had got out of his hearing: "surely it's not in yourself, but in the blessed words and things you have about you, that there is any good."

"Musha, good-night, Frank alanna," replied the other;—"an' the devil sweep you, for a skamin' vagabone, that's a curse to the country, and has kep me out o' more weddins than any one I ever met wid, by your roguery in puttin' evil between frinds an' neighbors, jist whin they'd be ready for the priest to say the words over them! Good won't come of you, you profligate."

The last words were scarcely uttered by the sturdy mendicant, when he turned round to observe whether or not Frank would stop at Larry Gartland's, the father of the girl to whom he had hitherto unsuccessfully avowed his attachment.

"I'd depind an him," said he, in a soliloquy, "as soon as I'd depind upon ice of an hour's growth: an', whether or not, sure as I'm an my way to Owen Reillaghan's, the father of the dacent boy that he's strivin' to outdo, mayn't I as well watch his motions, any way?"



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He accordingly proceeded along the shadowy side of the street, in order to avoid Frank's eye, should he chance to look back, and quietly dodged on until he fairly saw him enter the house.

Having satisfied himself that the object of Frank's visit to the village was in some shape connected with Peggy Gartland, the mendicant immediately retraced his steps, and at a pace more rapid than usual, strided on to Owen Reillaghan's, whither he arrived just in time to secure an excellent Christmas-eve dinner.

In Ireland, that description of mendicants which differ so strikingly from the common crowd of beggars as to constitute a distinct species, comprehends within itself as anomalous an admixture of fun and devotion, external rigor and private licentiousness, love of superstition and of good whiskey, as might naturally be supposed, without any great sketch of credulity, to belong to men thrown among a people in whom so many extremes of character and morals meet. The known beggar, who goes his own rounds, and has his own walk, always adapts his character to that of his benefactor, whose whims and peculiarities of temper he studies with industry, and generally with success. By this means, joined to a dexterity in tracing out the private history of families and individuals, he is enabled to humor the caprices, to manage the eccentricities, and to touch with a masterly hand the prejudices, and particular opinions, of his patrons; and this he contrives to do with great address and tact. Such was the character of Darby More, whose person, naturally large, was increased to an enormous size by the number of coats, blankets, and bags, with which he was encumbered. A large belt, buckled round his body, contained within its girth much more of money, meal, and whiskey, than ever met the eye; his hat was exceedingly low in the crown; his legs were cast in at least three pairs of stockings; and in his hand he carried a long cant, spiked at the lower end, with which he slung himself over small rivers and dykes, and kept dogs at bay. He was a devotee, too, notwithstanding the whiskey horn under his arm; attended wakes, christenings, and weddings: rubbed for the rose (\* a scrofulous swelling) and king's evil, (for the varlet insisted that he was a seventh son); cured toothaches, colics, and headaches, by charms; but made most money by a knack which he possessed of tatooing into the naked breast the representation of Christ upon the cross. This was a secret of considerable value, for many of the superstitious people believed that by having this stained in upon them, they would escape unnatural deaths, and be almost sure of heaven.

When Darby approached Reillaghan's house, he was considering the propriety of disclosing to his son the fact of having left his rival with Peggy Gartland. He ultimately determined that it would be proper to do so; for he was shrewd enough to suspect that the wish Frank had expressed of seeing him before he left the country, was but a ruse to purchase his silence touching his appearance in the village. In this, however, he was mistaken.

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“God save the house!” exclaimed Darby, on entering—“God save the house, an’ all that’s in it! God save it to the North!” and he formed the sign of the cross in every direction to which he turned: “God save it to the South! + to the Aiste! + and to the Waiste! + Save it upwards! + and save it downwards! + Save it backwards! + and save it forwards! + Save it right! + and save it left! + Save it by night! + save it by day! + Save it here! + save it there! + Save it this way! + an’ save it that way! + Save it atin’! + + + an’ save it drinkin’! + + + + + + + *Oxis Doxis Glorioxis*—Amin. An’ now that I’ve blessed the place in the name of the nine Patriarchs, how are yez all, man, woman, an’ child? An’ a merry Christmas to yez, says Darby More!”

Darby, in the usual spirit of Irish hospitality, received a sincere welcome, was placed up near the fire, a plate filled with the best food on the table laid before him, and requested to want nothing for the asking.

“Why, Darby,” said Reillaghan, “we expected you long ago: why didn’t you come sooner?”

“The Lord’s will be done! for ev’ry man has his troubles,” replied Darby, stuffing himself in the corner like an Epicure; “an’ why should a sinner like me, or the likes of me, be without thim? ’Twas a dhrame I had last night that kep me. They say, indeed, that dhrames go by contriaries, but not always, to my own knowledge.”

“An’ what was the dhrame about, Darby?” inquired Reillaghan’s wife.

“Why, ma’am, about some that I see on this hearth, well, an’ in good health; may they long live to be so! *Oxis Doxis Glorioxis*—Amin!” + + +

“Blessed Virgin! Darby, sure it would be nothin’ bad that’s to happen? Would it, Darby?”

“Keep yourself aisy on that head. I have widin my own mind the power of makin’ it come out for good—I know the prayer for it. *Oxis Doxis!*” + +

“God be praised for that, Darby; sure it would be a terrible business, all out, if any thing was to happen. Here’s Mike that was born on Whissle \* Monday, of all days in the year, an’ you know, they say that any child born on that day is to die an unnatural death. We named Mike after St. Michael that he might purtect him.”

\* The people believe the superstition to be as is stated above. Any child born on Whitsunday, or the day after, is supposed to be doomed to die an unnatural death. The consequence is, that the child is named after and dedicated to some particular saint, in the hope that his influence may obviate his evil doom.

“Make yourself aisy, I say; don’t I tell you I have the prayer to keep it back—hach! hach! —why, there’s a bit stuck in my throat, some way! Wurrah dheelish, what’s this!

Maybe, you could give me a sup o' dhrink—wather, or anything to moisten the morsel I'm atin? Wurrah, ma'am dear, make haste, it's goin' agin' the breath wid me!"

"Oh, the sorra taste o' wather, Darby," said Owen; "sure this is Christmas-eve, you know: so you see, Darby, for ould acquaintance sake, an' that you may put up an odd prayer now an' thin for us, jist be thryin' this."

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Darby honored the gift by immediate acceptance.

"Well, Owen Reillaghan," said he, "you make me take more o' this stuff nor any man I know; and particularly by rason that bein' given, wid a blessin', to the ranns, an' prayers, an' holy charms, I don't think it so good; barrin', indeed, as Father Donnellan towld me, when the wind, by long fastin', gets into my stomach, as was the case today, I'm often throubled, God help me, wid a configuration in the—hugh! ugh—an' thin it's good for me—a little of it."

"This would make a brave powdher-horn, Darby Moore," observed one of Reilla-ghan's sons, "if it wasn't so big. What do you keep in it, Darby?"

"Why, *avillish*, (\* my sweet) nothin' indeed but a sup o' Father Donnellan's holy water, that they say by all accounts it costs him great trouble to make, by rason that he must fast a long time, and pray by the day, afore he gets himself holy enough to consecrate it."

"It smells like whiskey, Darby," said the boy, without any intention, however, of offending him. "It smells very like poteen."

"Hould yer tongue, Risthard," said the elder Reillaghan; "what 'ud make the honest man have whiskey in it? Didn't he tell you what's in it?"

"The gorsoon's right enough," replied Darby. "I got the horn from Barny Dalton a couple o' days agone; 'twas whiskey he had in it, an' it smells of it sure enough, an' will, indeed, for some time longer. Och! och! the heavens be praised, I've made a good dinner! May they never know want that gave it to me! Oxis Doxis Glorioxis—Amin!" + + +

"Darby, thry this again," said Reillaghan, offering him another bumper.

"Troth an' I will, thin, for I find myself a great dale the betther of the one I tuck. Well, here's health an' happiness to us, an' may we all meet in heaven! Risthard, hand me that horn till I be goin' out to the barn, in order to do somethin' for my sowl. The holy wather's a good thing to have about one."

"But the dhrame, Darby?" inquired Mrs. Reillaghan. "Won't you tell it to us?"

"Let Mike follow me to the barn," he replied, "an' I'll tell him as much of it as he ought to hear. An' now let all of yez prepare for the Midnight Mass; go there wid proper intuitions, an' not to be coortin' or dhrinkin' by the way. We're all sinners, any way, an' oughtn't to neglect our sowls. Oxis Doxis Glorioxis. Amin!"

He immediately strided with the horn under his arm, towards the barn, where he knelt, and began his orisons in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard in the kitchen. When he was gone, Mrs. Reillaghan, who, with the curiosity natural to her sex, and the

superstition peculiar to her station in life, felt anxious to hear Darby's dream, urged Mike to follow him forthwith, that he might prevail on him to detail it at full length.

Darby, who knew not exactly what the dream ought to be, replied to Mike's inquiries vaguely.

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"Mike," said he, "until the proper time comes, I can't tell it; but listen; take my advice, an' slip down to Peggy Gartland's by and by. I have strong suspicions, if my dhrame is thrue, that Frank M'Kenna has a design upon her. People may be abroad this night widout bein' noticed, by rason o' the Midnight Mass; Frank has, friends in Kilnaheery, down behind the moors; an' the divil might tempt him to bring her there. Keep your eye an him, or rather an Peggy. If my dhrame's true, he was there this night."

"I thought I gave him enough on her account," said. Mike. "The poor girl hasn't a day's pace in regard of him; but, plase goodness, I'll soon put an end to it, for I'll marry her durin' the Hollydays."

"Go, avick, an' let me finish my Pudheran Partha: I have to get through it before the Midnight Mass comes. Slip down, and find out what he was doin'; and when you come back, let me know."

Mike, perfectly aware of young M'Kenna's character, immediately went towards Lisrum, for so the village where Peggy Gartland lived was called. He felt the danger to be apprehended from the interference of his rival the more acutely, inasmuch as he was not ignorant of the feuds and quarrels which the former had frequently produced between friends and neighbors, by the subtle poison of his falsehoods, which were both wanton and malicious. He therefore advanced at an unusually brisk pace, and had nearly reached the village, when he perceived in the distance a person resembling Frank approaching him at a pace nearly as rapid as his own.

"If it's Frank M'Kenna," thought he, "he must pass me, for this is his straight line home."

It appeared, however, that he had been mistaken; for he whom he had supposed to be the object of his enmity, crossed the field by a different path, and seemed to be utterly ignorant of the person whom he was about to meet—so far, at least, as a quick, free, unembarrassed step could intimate his unacquaintance with him.

The fact, however, was, that Reillaghan, had the person whom he met approached him more nearly, would have found his first suspicions correct. Frank was then on his return from Gartland's, and no sooner perceived Reillaghan, whom he immediately recognized by his great height, than he took another path in order to avoid him. The enmity between these rivals was, deep and implacable; aggravated on the one hand by a sense of unmerited injury, and on the other by personal defeat and the bitterest jealousy. For this reason neither of them wished to meet, particularly Frank M'Kenna, who not only hated, but feared his enemy.

Having succeeded in avoiding Reillaghan, the latter soon reached home; but here he found the door closed, and the family, without a single exception, in the barn, which was now nearly crowded with the youngsters of both sexes from the surrounding villages.

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Frank's arrival among them gave a fresh impulse to their mirth and enjoyment. His manners were highly agreeable, and his spirits buoyant almost to levity. Notwithstanding the badness of his character in the opinion of the sober, steady, and respectable inhabitants of the parish, yet he was a favorite with the desolate and thoughtless, and with many who had not an opportunity of seeing him except in his most favorable aspect. Whether he entertained on this occasion any latent design that might have induced him to assume a frankness of manner, and an appearance of good-humor, which he did not feel, it is difficult to determine. Be this as it may, he made himself generally agreeable, saw that every one was comfortable, suggested an improvement in the arrangement of the seats, broke several jests on Bariry and Granua Waile—which, however, were returned with interest—and, in fact, acquitted himself so creditably, that his father whispered with a sigh to his mother—"Alley, achora, wouldn't we be the happy family if that misfortunate boy of ours was to be always the thing he appears to be? God help him! the gommach, if he had sinse, and the fear o' God before him, he'd not be sich a pace o' desate to sthrangers, and such a divil's limb wid ourselves: but he's young, an' may see his evil coorses in time, wid the help o' God."

"Musha, may God grant it!" exclaimed his mother: "a fine slip he is, if his heart 'ud only turn to the right thoughts. One can't help feelin' pride out o' him, when they see him actin' wid any kind o' rason."

The Irish dance, like every other assembly composed of Irishmen and Irishwomen, presents the spectators with those traits which enter into our conception of rollicking fun and broad humor. The very arrangements are laughable; and when joined to the eccentric strains of some blind fiddler like Barny Dhal, to the grotesque and caricaturish faces of the men, and the modest, but evidently arch and laughter-loving countenances of the females, they cannot fail to impress an observing mind with the obvious truth, that a nation of people so thoughtless and easily directed from the serious and useful pursuits of life to such scenes, can seldom be industrious and wealthy, nor, despite their mirth and humor, a happy people.

The barn in which they danced on this occasion was a large one. Around the walls were placed as many seats as could be spared from the neighbors' houses; these were eked out by sacks of corn laid length-wise, logs of round timber, old creels, iron pots with their bottoms turned up, and some of them in their usual position. On these were the youngsters seated, many of the "boys" with their sweethearts on their knees, the arms of the fair ones lovingly around their necks; and, on the contrary many of the young women with their bachelors on their laps, their own necks also gallantly encircled by the arms of their admirers. Up in a corner sat Barny, surrounded by the seniors of the village, sawing the fiddle with indefatigable vigor, and leading the conversation with equal spirit. Indeed, his laugh was the loudest, and his joke the best; whilst, ever and anon, his music became perfectly furious—that is to say, when he rasped the fiddle with a desperate effort "to overtake the dancers," from whom, in the heat of the conversation, he had unwittingly lagged behind.

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Dancing in Ireland, like everything else connected with the amusement of the people, is frequently productive of bloodshed. It is not unusual for crack dancers from opposite parishes, or from distant parts of the same parish, to meet and dance against each other for victory. But as the judges in those cases consist of the respective friends or factions of the champions, their mode of decision may readily be conjectured. Many a battle is fought in consequence of such challenges, the result usually being that not he who has the lightest heel, but the hardest head, generally comes off the conqueror.

While the usual variety of Irish dances—the reel, jig, fling, three-part-reel, four-part-reel, rowly-powly, country-dance, cotillion, or cut-along (as the peasantry call it), and minuet, vulgarly minion, and minionet—were going forward in due rotation, our readers may be assured that those who were seated around the walls did not permit the time to pass without improving it. Many an attachment is formed at such amusements, and many a bitter jealousy is excited: the prude and coquette, the fop and rustic Lothario, stand out here as prominently to the eye of him who is acquainted with human nature, as they do in similar assemblies among the great: perhaps more so, as there is less art, and a more limited knowledge of intrigue, to conceal their natural character.

The dance in Ireland usually commences with those who sit next the door, from whence it goes round with the sun. In this manner it circulates two or three times, after which the order is generally departed from, and they dance according as they can. This neglect of the established rule is also a fertile source of discord; for when two persons rise at the same time, if there be not room for both, the right of dancing first is often decided by blows.

At the dance we are describing, however, there was no dissension; every heart appeared to be not only elated with mirth, but also free from resentment and jealousy. The din produced by the thumping of vigorous feet upon the floor, the noise of the fiddle, the chat between Barny and the little sober knot about him, together with the brisk murmur of the general conversation, and the expression of delight which sat on every countenance, had something in them elevating to the spirits.

Barny, who knew their voices, and even the mode of dancing peculiar to almost every one in the barn, had some joke for each. When a young man brings out his sweetheart—which he frequently does in a manner irresistibly ludicrous, sometimes giving a spring from the earth, his caubeen set with a knowing air on one side of his head, advancing at a trot on tiptoe, catching her by the ear, leading her out to her position, which is “to face the fiddler,” then ending by a snap of the fingers, and another spring, in which he brings his heel backwards in contact with his ham;—we say, when a young man brings out his sweetheart, and places her facing the fiddler, he asks her what will she dance; to which, if she has no favorite tune, she uniformly replies—“Your will is my pleasure.” This usually made Barny groan aloud.



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"What ails you, Barny?"

"Oh, thin, murdher alive, how little thruth's in this world! Your will's my pleassure! *Baithirshin!* but, sowl, if things goes an, it won't be long so!"

"Why, Barny," the young man would exclaim, "is the ravin' fit comin' over you?"

"No, in troth, Jim; *but it's thinkin' of home I am.* Howandiver, do you go an; but, *naboklish!* what'll ye have?"

"'Jig Polthouge,' Barny: but on your wrist ma bouchal, or Katty will lave us both ut o' sight in no time. Whoo! success! clear the coorse. Well done, Barny! That's the go."

When the youngsters had danced for some time, the fathers and mothers of the village were called upon "to step out." This was generally the most amusing scene in the dance. No excuse is ever taken on such occasions, for when they refuse, about a dozen young fellows place them, will they will they, upright upon the floor, from whence neither themselves nor their wives are permitted to move until they dance. No sooner do they commence, than, they are mischievously pitted against each other by two sham parties, one encouraging the wife, the other cheering on the good man; whilst the fiddler, falling in with the frolic, plays in his most furious style. The simplicity of character, and, perhaps, the lurking vanity of those who are the butts of the mirth on this occasion, frequently heighten the jest.

"Why, thin, Paddy, is it strivin' to outdo me you are? Faiks, avourneen, you never seen that day, any way," the old woman would exclaim, exerting all her vigor.

"Didn't I? Sowl, I'll sober you before I lave the flure, for all that," her husband would reply.

"An' do you forget," she would rejoin, "that the M'Carthy dhrop is in me; ay, an' it's to the good still."

And the old dame would accompany the boast with a fresh attempt at agility; to which Paddy would respond by "cutting the buckle," and snapping his fingers, whilst fifty voices, amidst roars of laughter, were loud in encouraging each.

"Handle your feet, Kitty, darlin'—the mettle's lavin' him!"

"Off wid the brogues, Paddy, or she'll do you. That's it; kick off the other, an' don't spare the flure."

"A thousand guineas on Katty! M'Carthy agin Gallagher for ever!—whirroo!"

“Blur alive the flure’s not benefittin by you, Paddy. Lay on it, man!—That’s it!—Bravo!—Whish!—Our side agin Europe!”

“Success, Paddy! Why you could dance the Dusty Miller upon a flure paved wid drawn razures, you’re so soople.”

“Katty for ever! The blood’s in you, Katty; you’ll win the day, a *ban choir!* (\* decent woman). More power to you!”

“I’ll hould a quart on Paddy. Heel an’ toe, Paddy, you sinner!”

“Right an’ left, Katty; hould an’, his breath’s goin’.”

“Right an’ wrong, Paddy, you spalpeen. The whiskey’s an you, man alive: do it decently, an’ don’t let me lose the wager.”

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In this manner would they incite some old man, and, perhaps, his older wife, to prolonged exertion, and keep them bobbing and jiggling about, amidst roars of laughter, until the worthy couple could dance no longer.

During stated periods of the night, those who took the most prominent part in the dance, got a plate and hat, with which they went round the youngsters, to make collections for the fiddler. Barny reserved his best and most sarcastic jokes for these occasions; for so correct was his ear, that he felt little difficulty in detecting those whose contributions to him were such as he did not relish.

The aptitude of the Irish for enjoying humorous images was well displayed by one or two circumstances which occurred on this night. A few of both sexes, who had come rather late, could get no other seats than the metal pots to which we have alluded. The young women were dressed in white, and their companions, who were also their admirers, exhibited, in proud display, each a bran-new suit, consisting of broadcloth coat, yellow-buff vest, and corduroy small-clothes, with a bunch of broad silk ribbons standing out at each knee. They were the sons and daughters of respectable farmers, but as all distinctions here entirely ceased, they were fain to rest contented with such seats as they could get, which on this occasion consisted of the pots aforesaid. No sooner, however, had they risen to dance than the house was convulsed with laughter, heightened by the sturdy vigor with which, unconscious of their appearance, they continued to dance. That part of the white female dresses which had come in contact with the pots, exhibited a circle like the full moon, and was black as pitch. Nor were their partners more lucky: those who sat on the mouths of the pots had the back part of their dresses streaked with dark circles, equally ludicrous. The mad mirth with which they danced, in spite of their grotesque appearance, was irresistible. This, and other incidents quite as pleasant—such as the case of a wag who purposely sank himself into one of the pots, until it stuck to him through half the dance—increased the laughter, and disposed them to peace and cordiality.

No man took a more active part in these frolics than young Frank M'Kenna. It is true, a keen eye might have noticed under his gayety something of a moody and dissatisfied air. As he moved about from time to time, he whispered something to above a dozen persons, who were well known in the country as his intimate companions, young fellows whose disposition and character were notoriously bad. When he communicated the whisper, a nod of assent was given by his confidants, after which it might be remarked that they moved round to the door with a caution that betrayed a fear of observation, and quietly slunk out of the barn one by one, though Frank himself did not immediately follow them. In about a quarter of an hour afterwards, Rody came in, gave him a signal and sat down. Frank then followed his companions, and after a few minutes Rody also disappeared. This was about ten o'clock, and the dance was proceeding with great gayety and animation.

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Frank's dread of openly offending his parents prevented him from assembling his associates in the dwelling-house; the only convenient place of rendezvous, therefore, of which they could avail themselves, was the stable. Here they met, and Frank, after uncorking a bottle of poteen, addressed them to the following effect:

"Boys, there's great excuse for me, in regard of my fight wid Mike Reillaghan; that you'll all allow. Come, boys, your healths! I can tell yez you'll find this good, the divil a doubt of it; be the same token, that I stole it from my father's Christmas dhrink; but no matter for that—I hope we'll never do worse. So, as I was sayin', you must bear me out as well as you can, when I'm brought before the Dilegates to-morrow, for challengin' and strikin' a brother.\* But, I think, you'll stand by me, boys?"

\* Those connected with illegal combinations are sworn to have no private or personal quarrels, nor to strike nor provoke each other to fight. He and Mike were members of such societies.

"By the tarn-o'-war, Frank, myself will fight to the knees for you."

"Faith, you may depend on us, Frank, or we're not to the fore."

"I know it, boys; and now for a piece of fun for this night. You see—come, Lanty, tare-an'-ounkers, drink, man alive—you see, wid regard to Peggy Gartland—eh? what the hell! is that a cough?"

"One o' the horses, man—go an."

"Rody, did Darby More go into the barn before you came out of it?"

"Darby More? not he. If he did, I'd a seen him surely."

"Why, thin, I'd kiss the book I seen him goin' towards the barn, as I was comin' into the stable. Sowl, he's a made boy, that; an' if I don't mistake, he's in Mike Reillaghan's intherest. You know divil a secret can escape him."

"Hut! the prayin' ould crathur was on his way to the Midnight Mass; he thravels slow, and, of coorse, has to set out early; besides, you know, he has Carols, and bades, and the likes, to sell at the chapel."

"Thrue, for you, Rody; why, I thought he might take it into his head to watch my motions, in regard that, as I said, I think him in Mike's intherest."

"Nonsense, man, what the dickens 'ud bring him into the stable loft? Why, you're beside yourself?"

“Be Gor, I bleeve so, but no matther. Boys, I want yez to stand to me to-night: I’m given to know for a sartinty that Mike and Peggy will be buckled to durin’ the Hollydays. Now, I wish to get the girl myself; for if I don’t get her, may I be ground to atoms if he will.”

“Well, but how will you manage? for she’s fond of him.”

“Why, I’ll tell you that. I was over there this evenin’, and I understand that all the family is goin’ to the Midnight Mass, barrin’ herself. You see, while they are all gone to the ‘mallet-office,\* we’ll slip down wid a thrifle o’ soot on our mugs, and walk down wid her to Kilnaheery, beyant the mountains, to an uncle o’ mine; an’ affcher that, let any man marry her who chooses to run the risk. Be the contints o’ the book, Atty, if you don’t dhrink I’ll knock your head agin the wall, you gommoch!”

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\* Mass, humorously so called, from the fact of those who attend it beating their breasts during their devotions.

“Why, thin, by all that’s beautiful, it’s a good spree; and we’ll stick to you like pitch.”

“Be the vartue o’ my oath, you don’t deserve to be in it, or you’d dhrink dacent. Why, here’s another bottle, an’ maybe there’s more where that was. Well, let us finish what we have, or be the five crasses, I’ll give up the whole business.”

“Why, thin, here’s success to us, any way; an’ high hangin’ to them that ‘ud desert you in your skame this blessed an’ holy night that’s in it!”

This was re-echoed by his friends, who pledged themselves by the most solemn oaths not to abandon him in the perpetration of the outrage which they had concerted. The other bottle was immediately opened, and while it lasted, the details of the plan were explained at full length. This over, they entered the barn one by one as before, except Frank and Rody, who as they were determined to steal another bottle from the father’s stock, did not appear among the dancers until this was accomplished.

The re-appearance of these rollicking and reckless young fellows in the dance, was hailed by all present; for their outrageous mirth was in character with the genius of the place. The dance went on with spirit; brag dancers were called upon to exhibit in hornpipes; and for this purpose a table was bought in from Frank’s kitchen on which they performed in succession, each dancer applauded by his respective party as the best in the barn.

In the meantime the night had advanced; the hour might be about half-past ten o’clock; all were in the zenith of enjoyment, when old Frank M’Kenna addressed them as follows:—

“Neighbors, the dickens o’ one o’ me would like to break up the sport—an’, in throth, harmless and dacent sport it is; but you all know that this is Christmas night, and that it’s our duty to attind the Midnight Mass. Anybody that likes to hear it may go, for it’s near time to be home and prepare for it; but the sorra one o’ me wants to take any of yez from your sport, if you prefer it; all I say is, that I must lave yez; so God be wid yez till we meet agin!”

This short speech produced a general bustle in the barn; many of the elderly neighbors left it, and several of the young persons also. It was Christmas Eve, and the Midnight Mass had from time immemorial so strong a hold upon their prejudices and affections, that the temptation must indeed have been great which would have prevented them from attending it. When old Frank went out, about one-third of those who were present

left the dance along with them; and as the hour for mass was approaching, they lost no time in preparing for it.

The Midnight Mass is, no doubt, a phrase familiar to our Irish readers; but we doubt whether those in the sister kingdoms, who may honor our book with a perusal, would, without a more particular description, clearly understand it.

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This ceremony was performed as a commemoration not only of the night, but of the hour in which Christ was born. To connect it either with edification, or the abuse of religion, would be invidious; so we overlook that, and describe it as it existed within our own memory, remarking, by the way, that though now generally discontinued, it is in some parts of Ireland still observed, or has been till within a few years ago.

The parish in which the scene of this story is laid was large, consequently the attendance of the people was proportionably great. On Christmas day a Roman Catholic priest has, or is said to have, the privilege of saying three masses, though on every other day in the year he can celebrate but two. Each priest, then, said one at midnight, and two on the following day.

Accordingly, about twenty or thirty years ago, the performance of the Midnight Mass was looked upon as an ordinance highly important and interesting. The preparations for it were general and fervent; so much so, that not a Roman Catholic family slept till they heard it. It is true it only occurred once a year; but had any person who saw it once, been called upon to describe it, he would say that religion could scarcely present a scene so wild and striking.

The night in question was very dark, for the moon had long disappeared, and as the inhabitants of the whole parish were to meet in one spot, it may be supposed that the difficulty was very great, of traversing, in the darkness of midnight, the space between their respective residences, and the place appointed by the priest for the celebration of mass. The difficulty, they contrived to surmount. From about eleven at night till twelve or one o'clock, the parish presented a scene singularly picturesque, and, to a person unacquainted with its causes, altogether mysterious. Over the surface of the surrounding country were scattered myriads of blazing torches, all converging to one point; whilst at a distance, in the central part of the parish, which lay in a valley, might be seen a broad focus of red light, quite stationary, with which one or more of the torches that moved across the fields mingled every moment. These torches were of bog-fir, dried and split for the occasion; all persons were accordingly furnished with them, and by their blaze contrived to make way across the country with comparative ease. This Mass having been especially associated with festivity and enjoyment, was always attended by such excessive numbers, that the ceremony was in most parishes celebrated in the open air, if the weather were at all favorable. Altogether, as we have said, the appearance of the country at this dead hour of the night, was wild and impressive. Being Christmas every heart was up, and every pocket replenished with money, if it could at all be procured. This general elevation of spirits was nowhere more remarkable than in contemplating the thousands of both sexes, old, young, each furnished,



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as before said, with a blazing flambeau of bog-fir, all streaming down the mountain sides, along the roads, or across the fields, and settling at last into one broad sheet of fire. Many a loud laugh might then be heard ringing the night echo into reverberation; mirthful was the gabble in hard guttural Irish; and now and then a song from some one whose potations had been, rather copious, would rise on the night-breeze, to which a chorus was subjoined by a dozen voices from the neighboring groups.

On passing the shebeen and public-houses, the din of mingled voices that issued from them was highly amusing, made up, as it was, of songs, loud talk, rioting and laughter, with an occasional sound of weeping from some one who had become penitent in big drink. In the larger public-houses—for in Ireland there usually are one or two of these in the immediate vicinity of each chapel, family parties were assembled, who set in to carouse both before and after mass. Those however, who had any love affair on hands generally selected the shebeen house, as being private, and less calculated to expose them to general observation. As a matter of course, these jovial orgies frequently produced such disastrous consequences, both to human life and female reputation, that the intrigues between the sexes, the quarrels, and violent deaths resulting from them, ultimately occasioned the discontinuance of a ceremony which was only productive of evil. To this day, it is an opinion among the peasantry in many parts of Ireland, that there is something unfortunate connected with all drinking bouts held upon Christmas Eve. Such a prejudice naturally arises from a recollection of the calamities which so frequently befell many individuals while Midnight Masses were in the habit of being generally celebrated, although it is not attributed to their existence.

None of Frank M'Kenna's family attended mass but himself and his wife. His children having been bound by all the rules of courtesy to do the honors of the dance, could not absent themselves from it; nor, indeed, were they disposed to do so. Frank, however, and his "good woman," carried their torches, and joined the crowds which flocked to this scene of fun and devotion.

When they had arrived at the cross-roads beside which the chapel was situated, the first object that presented itself so prominently as to attract observation was Darby More, dressed out in all his paraphernalia of blanket and horn, in addition to which he held in his hand an immense torch, formed into the figure of a cross. He was seated upon a stone, surrounded by a ring of old men and women, to whom he sang and sold a variety of Christmas Carols, many of them rare curiosities in their way, inasmuch as they were his own composition. A little beyond them stood Mike Keillaghan and Peggy Gartland, towards both of whom he cast from time to time a glance of latent humor and triumph. He did not simply confine himself to singing his carols, but, during the pauses of the melody, addressed the wondering and attentive crowd as follows:—

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“Good Christians—This is the day—howandiver, it’s night now, Glory be to God—that the angel Lucifer appeared to Shud’orth, Meeshach, an’ To-bed-we-go, in the village of Constantinople, near Jerooslem. The heavens be praised for it, ‘twas a blessed an’ holy night, an’ remains so from that day to this—Oxis doxis glorioxis, Amin! Well, the sarra one of him but appeared to thim at the hour o’ midnight, but they were asleep at the time, you see, and didn’t persave him go—wid that he pulled out a horn like mine—an’, by the same token, it’s lucky to wear horns about one from that day to this—an’ he put it to his lips, an’ tuck a good dacent—I mane, gave a good dacent blast that soon roused them. ‘Are yez asleep?’ says he, when they awoke: ‘why then, bud-an’-age!’ says he, ‘isn’t it a burnin’ shame for able stout fellows like yez to be asleep at the hour o’ midnight of all hours o’ the night. Tare-an’-age!’ says he, ‘get up wid yez, you dirty spalpeens! There’s St. Pathrick in Jerooslem beyant; the Pope’s signin’ his mittimus to Ireland, to bless it in regard that neither corn, nor barley, nor phaties will grow on the land in consequence of a set of varmints called Black-dugs that ates it up; an’ there’s not a glass o’ whiskey to be had in Ireland for love or money,’ says Lucifer. ‘Get up wid yez,’ says he, ‘an’ go in an’ get his blessin’; sure there’s not a Catholic-in the counthry, barrin’ Swaddlers, but’s in the town by this,’ says he: ‘ay, an’ many of the Protestants themselves, and the Black-mouths, an’ Blue-bellies, (\* Different denominations of Dissenters) are gone in to get a share of it. And now,’ says he, ‘bekase you wor so heavy-headed, I ordher it from this out, that the present night is to be obsarved in the Catholic church all over the world, an’ must be kept holy; an’ no throe Catholic ever will miss from this pariod an opportunity of bein’ awake at midnight,’ says he, ‘glory be to God!’ An’ now, good Christians, you have an account o’ the blessed Carol I was singin’ for yez. They’re but hapuns a-piece; an’ anybody that has the grace to keep one o’ these about them, will never meet wid sudden deaths or accidents, sich as hangin’, or drownin’, or bein’ taken suddenly wid a configuration inwardly. I wanst knew a holy man that had a dhrame—about a friend of his, it was——Will any of yez take one?—

“Thank you, a colleen: my blessin’, the bless-in’ o’ the pilgrim, be an you! God bless you, Mike Reillaghan; an’ I’m proud that he put it into your heart to buy one for the rasons you know. An’ now that Father Hoolaghan’s comin’, any of yez that ’ill want them ’ill find me here agin when mass is over—Oxis doxis glorioxis, Amin!”

The priest at this time made his appearance, and those who had been assembled on the cross-roads joined the crowd at the chapel. No sooner was it bruited among them that their pastor had arrived, than the noise, gabble, singing, and laughing were immediately hushed; the shebeen and public-houses were left untenanted; and all flocked to the chapel-green, where mass was to be said, as the crowd was too large to be contained within the small chapel.

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Mike Reillaghan and Peggy Gartland were among the last who sought the “green;” as lovers, they probably preferred walking apart, to the inconvenience of being jostled by the multitude. As they sauntered on slowly after the rest, Mike felt himself touched on the shoulder, and on turning round, found Darby More beside him.

“It’s painful to my feelin’s,” observed the mendicant, “to have to say this blessed night that your father’s son should act so shabby an’ ondacent.”

“Saints above! how, Darby?”

“Why, don’t you know that only for me—for what I heard, an’ what I tould you—you’d not have the purty girl here at your elbow? Wasn’t it, as I said, his intintion to come and whip down the colleen to Kilnaheery while the family ’ud be at mass; sure only for this, I say, you bosthoon, an’ that I made you bring her to mass, where ’ud the purty colleen be? why half way to Kilnaheery, an’ the girl disgraced for ever!”

“Thru for you, Darby, I grant it: but what do you want me to do?”

“Oh, for that matther, nothin’ at all, Mike; only I suppose that when your tailor made the clothes an you, he put no pockets to them?”

“Oh, I see where you are, Darby! well, here’s a crown for you; an’ when Peggy an’ I’s made man and wife, you’ll get another.”

“Mike, achora, I see you are your father’s son still; now listen to me: first you needn’t fear sudden death while you keep that blessed Carol about you; next get your friends together goin’ home, for Frank might jist take the liberty, wid about a score of his ‘boys,’ to lift her from you even thin. Do the thing, I say—don’t thrust him; an’ moreover, watch in her father’s house tonight wid your friends. Thirdly, make it up wid Frank; there’s an oath upon you both, you persave? Make it up wid him, if he axes you: don’t have a broken oath upon you; for if you refuse, he’ll put you out o’ connection, (\* That is, out of connection with Ribbonism) an’ that ’ud plase him to the back-bone.”

Mike felt the truth and shrewdness of this advice, and determined to follow it. Both young men had been members of an illegal society, and in yielding to their passions so far as to assault each other, had been guilty of perjury. The following Christmas-day had been appointed by their parish Delegates to take the quarrel into consideration; and the best means of escaping censure was certainly to express regret for what had occurred, and to terminate the hostility by an amicable adjustment of their disputes.

They had now reached the chapel-green, where the scene that presented itself was so striking and strange, that we will give the reader an imperfect sketch of its appearance. He who stood at midnight upon a little mount which rose behind the chapel, might see between five and six thousand torches, all blazing together, and forming a level mass of

red dusky light, burning against the dark horizon. These torches were so close to each other that their light seemed

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to blend, as if they had constituted one wide surface of flame; and nothing could be more preternatural-looking than the striking and devotional countenances of those who were assembled at their midnight worship, when observed beneath this canopy of fire. The Mass was performed under the open sky, upon a table covered with the sacrificial linen, and other apparatus for the ceremony. The priest stood, robed in white, with two large torches on each side of his book, reciting the prayers in a low, rapid voice, his hands raised, whilst the congregation were hushed and bent forward in the reverential silence of devotion, their faces touched by the strong blaze of the torches into an expression of deep solemnity. The scenery about the place was wild and striking; and the stars, scattered thinly over the heavens, twinkled with a faint religious light, that blended well with the solemnity of this extraordinary worship, and rendered the rugged nature of the abrupt cliffs and precipices, together with the still outline of the stern mountains, sufficiently visible to add to the wildness and singularity of the ceremony. In fact, there was an unearthly character about it; and the spectre-like appearance of the white-robed priest as he

“Muttered his prayer to the midnight air,”

would almost impress a man with the belief that it was a meeting of the dead, and that the priest was repeating, like the Gray Friar, his

“Mass of the days that were gone.”

On the ceremony being concluded, the scene, however, was instantly changed: the lights were waved and scattered promiscuously among each other, giving an idea of confusion and hurry that was strongly contrasted with the death-like stillness that prevailed a few minutes before. The gabble and laugh were again heard loud and hearty, and the public and shebeen houses once more became crowded. Many of the young I people made, on these occasions, what is I called “a runaway;” (\* Rustic elopement) and other peccadilloes took place, for which the delinquents were “either read out from the altar,” or sent; probably to St. Patrick’s Purgatory at Lough Derg, to do penance. Those who did not choose to stop in the whiskey-houses now hurried home with all speed, to take some sleep before early Mass, which was to be performed the next morning about daybreak. The same number of lights might therefore be seen streaming in different ways over the parish; the married men holding the torches, and leading their wives; bachelors escorting their sweethearts, and not unfrequently extinguishing their flambeaux, that the dependence of the females upon their care and protection might more lovingly call forth their gallantry.

When Mike Reillaghan considered with due attention the hint which Darby More had given him, touching the necessity of collecting his friends as an escort for Peggy Gartland, he had strong reasons to admit its justness and propriety. After Mass he

spoke to about two dozen young fellows who joined him, and under their protection Peggy now returned safely to her father's house.

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Frank M'Kenna and his wife reached home about two o'clock; the dance was comparatively thin, though still kept up with considerable spirit. Having solemnized himself by the grace of so sacred a rite, Frank thought proper to close the amusement, and recommend those whom he found in the barn to return to their respective dwellings.

"You have had a merry night, childher," said he; "but too much o' one thing's good for nothin'; so don't make a toil of a pleasure, but go all home dacently an' soberly, in the name o' God."

This advice was accordingly followed. The youngsters separated, and M'Kenna joined his family, "to have a sup along wid them and Barny, in honor of what they had hard." It was upon this occasion he missed his son Frank, whose absence from the dance he had not noticed since his return until then.

"Musha, where's Frank," he inquired: "I'll warrant him, away wid his blackguards upon no good. God look down upon him! Many a black heart has that boy left us! If it's not the will o' heaven, I fear he'll come to no good. Barny, is he long gone from the dance?"

"Troth, Frank, wid the noise an' dancin', an' me bem' dark," replied Barny, shrewdly, "I can't take on me to say. For all you spake agin him, the sorra one of him but's a clane, dacent, spirited boy, as there is widin a great ways of him. Here's all your, healths! Faix, 'girls, you'll all sleep sound."

"Well," said Mrs. M'Kenna, "the knowledge of that Darby More is unknowable! Here's a Carol I bought from him, an' if you wor but to hear the explanations he put to it! Why Father Hoolaghan could hardly outdo him!"

"Divil a-man in the five parishes can dance 'Jig Polthogue' wid him, for all that," said Barny. "Many a time Granua an' I played it for him, an' you'd know the tune upon his feet. He undherstands a power o' ranns and prayers, an' has charms an' holy herbs for all kinds of ailments, no doubt."

"These men, you see," observed Mrs. M'Kenna, in the true spirit of credulity and superstition, "may do many things that the likes of us oughtn't to do, by raison of their great fastin' an' prayin'."

"Thru for you, Alley," replied her husband: "but come, let us have a sup more in comfort: the sleep's gone a *shraugran* an us this night, any way, so, Barny, give us a song, an' afther that we'll have a taste o' prayers, to close the night."

"But you don't think of the long journey I've before me," replied Barny: "how-and-iver, if you promise to send some one home wid me, we'll have the song. I wouldn't care, but the night bein' dark, you see, I'll want somebody to guide me."

“Faith, an’ it’s but rasonable, Barny, an’ you must get Rody home wid you. I suppose he’s asleep in his bed by this, but we’ll rouse him!”

Barny replied by a loud triumphant laugh, for this was one of his standing jests.



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"Well, Frank," said he, "I never thought you war so soft, and me can pick my steps me same at night as in daylight! Sure that's the way I done them to-night, when one o' Granua's strings broke. 'Sweets o' psin,' says I; 'a candle—bring me a candle immediately.' An' down came Rody in all haste wid a candle. 'Six eggs to you, Rody,' says myself, 'an' half-a-dozen o' them rotten! but you're a bright boy, to bring a candle to a blind man!' and then he stood a *bouloare* to the whole house—ha, ha, ha!"

Barney, who was not the man to rise first from the whiskey, commenced the relation of his choicest anecdotes; old Frank and the family, being now in a truly genial mood, entered into the spirit of his jests, so that between chat, songs, and whiskey, the hour had now advanced to four o'clock. The fiddler was commencing another song, when the door opened, and Frank presented himself, nearly, but not altogether in a state of intoxication; his face was besmeared with blood; and his whole appearance that of a man under the influence of strong passion, such as would seem to be produced by disappointment and defeat.

"What!" said the father, "is it snowin', Frank? Your clothes are covered wid snow!"

"Lord, guard us!" exclaimed the mother, "is that blood upon your face, Frank?"

"It is snowin', and it is blood that's upon my face," answered Frank, moodily—"do you want to know more news?"

"Why, ay indeed," replied his mother, "we want to hear how you came to be cut?"

"You won't hear it, thin," he replied.

The mother was silent, for she knew the terrible fits of passion to which he was subject.

The father groaned deeply, and exclaimed—"Frank, Frank, God help you, an' show you the sins you're committin', an' the heart-scaldin' you're givin' both your mother and me! What fresh skrimmage had you that you're in that state?"

"Spare yourself the throuble of inquiren'," he replied: "all I can say," he continued, starting up into sudden fury—"all I can say, an' I say it—I swear it—where's the prayer-book?" and he ran frantically to a shelf beside the dresser on which the prayer-book lay,—"ay! by him that made me I'll sware it—by this sacred book, while I live, Mike Keillaghan, the husband of Peggy Gartland you'll never be, if I should swing for it! Now you all seen I kissed the book!" as he spoke, he tossed it back upon the shelf.

The mirth that had prevailed in the family was immediately hushed, and a dead silence ensued; Frank sat down, but instantly rose again, and flung the chair from him with such violence that it was crashed to pieces; he muttered oaths and curses, ground his teeth, and betrayed all the symptoms of jealousy, hatred, and disappointment.

“Frank, a bouchal,” said Barny, commencing to address him in a conciliatory tone——  
“Frank, man alive——”

“Hould your tongue, I say, you blind vagabone, or by the night above us, I’ll break your fiddle over your skull, if you dar to say another word. What I swore I’ll do, an’ let no one crass me.”

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He was a powerful young man, and such was his temper, and so well was it understood, that not one of the family durst venture a word of remonstrance.

The father arose, went to the door, and returned. "Barny," said he, "you must content yourself where you are for this night. It's snowin' heavily, so you had better sleep wid Rody; I see a light in the barn, I suppose he's after bringing in his bed an' makin' it."

"I'll do any thing," replied the poor fiddler, now apprehensive of violence from the outrageous temper of young Frank.

"Well, thin," added the good man, "let us all go to bed, in the name of God. Micaul, bring Barny to the barn, and see that he's comfortable."

This was complied with, and the family quietly and timidly retired to rest, leaving the violent young man storming and digesting his passion, behind them.

Mass on Christmas morning was then, as now, performed at day-break, and again the Roman Catholic inhabitants of the parish were up betimes to attend it. Frank M'Kenna's family were assembled, notwithstanding their short sleep, at an early breakfast; but their meal, in consequence of the unpleasant sensation produced by the outrage of their son, was less cheerful than it would have otherwise been. Perhaps, too, the gloom which hung over them, was increased by the snow that had fallen the night before, and by the wintry character of the day, which was such as to mar much of their expected enjoyment. There was no allusion made to their son's violence over-night; neither did he himself appear to be in any degree affected by it. When breakfast was over, they prepared to attend mass, and, what was unusual, young Frank was the first to set out for the chapel.

"Maybe," said the father, after he was gone—"maybe that fool of a boy is sarry for his behavior. It's many a day since I knew him to go to mass of his own accord. It's a good sign, any way."

"Musha," inquired his mother, "what could happen atween him an' that civil boy, Mike Reillaghan?"

"The sorra one o' me knows," replied his father: "an' now that I think of it, sure enough there was none o' them at the dance last night, although I sent himself down for them. Micaul," he added, addressing the other son, "will you put an your big coat, slip down to Reillaghan's, an' bring me word what came atween them at all; an' tell Owen himself the thruth that this boy's brakin' our hearts by his coorses."

Micaul, who, although he knew the cause of the enmity between these rivals, was ignorant of that which occasioned his brother's rash oath, also felt anxious to ascertain the circumstances of the last quarrel. For this purpose, as well as in obedience to his

father's wishes, he proceeded to Reillaghan's and arrived just as Darby More and young Mike had set out for mass.

"What," said the mendicant, "can be bringing Micaul down, I wondher? somethin' about that slip o' grace, his brother."

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"I suppose, so," said Mike; "an' I wish the same slip was as dacent an' inoffensive as he is. I don't know a boy livin' I'd go farther for nor the same Micaul.—He's a credit to the family as much as the other's a stain upon them."

"Well, any how, you war Frank's match, an' more, last night. How bittther he was bint on bringin' Peggy aff', when he an' his set waited till they seen the country clear, an' thought the family asleep? Had you man for man, Mike?"

"Ay, about that; an' we sat so snug in Peggy's that you'd hear a pin fallin'. A hard tug, too, there was in the beginnin'; but whin they found that we had a strong back, they made away, an' we gave them purshute from about the house."

"You may thank me, any how, for havin' her to the good; but I knew by my dhrame, wid the help o' God, that there was somethin' to happen; by the same a token, that your mother's an' her high horse about that dhrame. I'm to tell it to her, wid the sinse of it, in the evenin', when the day's past, an' all of us in comfort."

"What was it, Darby? sure you may let me hear it."

"Maybe I will in the evenin'. It was about you an' Peggy, the darlin'. But how will you manage in regard of brakin' the oath, an' sthrikin' a brother?"

"Why, that I couldn't get over it, when he sthruck me first: sure he's worse off. I'll lave it to the Dilegates, an' whatever judgment they give out, I'll take wid it."

"Well," observed Darby, sarcastically, "it made him do one good turn, any way."

"What was that, Darby? for good turns are but scarce wid him."

"Why, it made him hear mass to-day," replied the mendicant; "an' that's what he hadn't the grace to do this many a year. It's away in the mountains wid his gun he'd be, thracin', an' a fine day it is for it—only this business prevints him. Now, Mike," observed. Darby, "as we're comin' out upon the boreen, I'll fall back, an' do you go an; I have part of my padareem to say, before I get to the chapel, wid a blessin'; an' we had as good not be seen together."

The mendicant, as he spoke, pulled out a long pair of beads, on which he commenced his prayers, occasionally accosting an acquaintance with the *Gho mhan y Deah ghud*, (\* God save you) and sometimes taking a part in the conversation for a minute or two, after which he resumed the prayers as before.

The day was now brightening up, although the earlier part of the morning had threatened severe weather. Multitudes were flocking to the chapel; the men well secured in frieze great-coats, in addition to which, many of them had their legs bound with straw ropes, and others with leggings made of old hats, cut up for the purpose.

The women were secured with cloaks, the hoods of which were tied with kerchiefs of some showy color over their bonnets or their caps, which, together with their elbows projecting behind, for the purpose of preventing their dress from being dabbled in the snow, gave them a marked and most picturesque appearance.

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Reillaghan and M'Kenna both reached the chapel a considerable time before the arrival of the priest; and as a kind of Whiteboy committee was to sit for the purpose of investigating their conduct in holding out so dangerous an example as they did, by striking each other, contrary to their oaths as brothers under the same system, they accordingly were occupied each in collecting his friends, and conciliating those whom they supposed to be hostile to them on the opposite party. It had been previously arranged that this committee should hold a court of inquiry, and that, provided they could not agree, the matter was to be referred to two hedge-schoolmasters, who should act as umpires; but if it happened that the latter could not decide it, there was no other tribunal appointed to which a final appeal could be made.

According to these regulations, a court was opened in a shebeen-house, that stood somewhat distant from the road. Twelve young fellows seated themselves on each side of a deal table, with one of the umpires at each end of it, and a bottle of whiskey in the middle. In a higher sphere of life it is usual to refer such questionable conduct as occurs in duelling, to the arbitration of those who are known to be qualified by experience in the duello. On this occasion the practice was not much departed from, those who had been thus selected as the committee being the notoriously pugnacious "boys" in the whole parish.

"Now, boys," said one of the schoolmasters, "let us proceed to operations wid proper spirit," and he filled a glass of whiskey as he spoke. "Here's all your healths, and next, pace and unanimity to us! Call in the culprits."

Both were accordingly admitted, and the first speaker resumed—"Now, in the second place, I'll read yez that part of the oath which binds us all under the obligation of not strikin' one another—hem! hem! 'No brother is to strike another, knowing him to be such; he's to strike him—hem!—neither in fair nor market, at home nor abroad, neither in public nor in private, neither on Sunday nor week-day, present or absent, nor—"

"I condimn that," observed the other master—"I condimn it, as bein' too latitudinarian in principle, an' containing a para-dogma; besides it's bad grammar."

"You're rather airy in the market wid your bad grammar," replied the other: "I'll grant you the paradogma, but I'll stand up for the grammar of it, while I'm able to stand up for anything."

"Faith, an' if you rise to stand up for that," replied his friend, "and doesn't choose to sit down till you prove it to be good grammar, you'll be a standin' joke all your life."

"I bleeve it's purty conspicuous in the parish, that I have often, in our disputations about grammar, left you widout a leg to stand upon at all," replied the other.

This sally was well received, but his opponent was determined to push home the argument at once.



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"I would be glad to know," he inquired, "by what beautiful invention a man could contrive to strike another in his absence? Have you good grammar for that?"

"And did you never hear of detraction?" replied his opponent; "that is, a man who's in the habit of spaking falsehoods of his friends when their backs are turned—that is to say, when they are absent. Now, sure, if a man's absent when his back's turned, mayn't any man whose back's turned be said to be absent—ergo, to strike a man behind his back is to strike him when he's absent. Does that confound you? where's your logic and grammar to meet proper ratiocination like what I'm displaying?"

"Faith," replied the other, "you may have had logic and grammar, but I'll take my oath it was in your younger years, for both have been absent ever since I knew you: they turned their backs upon you, man alive; for they didn't like, you see, to be keepin' bad company—ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you poor crathur," said his antagonist, "if I'd choose to let myself out, I could make a hare of you in no time entirely."

"And an ass of yourself," retorted the other: "but you may save yourself the trouble in regard of the last, for your friends know you to be an ass ever since they remember you. You have them here, man alive, the auricles," and he pointed to his ears.

"Hut! get out with you, you poor Jamaica-headed castigator, you; sure you never had more nor a thimbleful o' sense on any subject."

"Faith, an' the thimble that measured yours was a tailor's, one without a bottom in it, an' good measure you got, you miserable flagellator! what are you but a *nux vomica*? A fit of the ague's a thrifle compared to your asinity."

The "boys" were delighted at this encounter, and utterly forgetful of the pacific occasion on which they had assembled, began to pit them against each other with great glee.

"That's a hard hit, Misther Costigan; but you won't let it pass, any how."

"The ague an' you are ould acquaintances," retorted Costigan; "whenever a scrimmage takes place, you're sure to resave a visit from it."

"Why, I'm not such a hare as yourself," replied his rival, "nor such a great hand at batin' the absent—ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Misther Connell—that's a leveller; come, Misther Costigan, bedad, if you don't answer that you're bate."

“By this and by that, man alive, if you don’t mend your manners, maybe I’d make it betther for you to be absent also. You’ll only put me to the throuble of men din’ them for you.”

“Mend my manners!” exclaimed his opponent, with a bitter sneer,—“you to mend them! out wid your budget and your hammer, then; you’re the very tinker of good manners—bekase for one dacency you’d mend, you’d spoil twenty.”

“I’m able to hammer you at all events, or, for that matther, any one of your illiterate gination. Sure it’s well known that you can’t tach Voshter (Voster) widout the Kay.”

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"Hould there, if you plase," exclaimed one of his opponent's relations; "don't lug in his family; that's known to be somewhat afore your own, I bleeve. There's no Informers among them, Misther Costigan: keep at home, masther, if you plase."

"At home! That's more than some o' your own cleavings (\* distant relations) have been able to do," rejoined Costigan, alluding to one of the young fellow's acquaintances who had been transported.

"Do you mane to put an affront upon me?" said the other.

"Since the barrhad (\* cap) fits you, wear it," replied Costigan.

"Very right, masther, make him a present of it," exclaimed one of Costigan's distant relations; "he desarves that, an' more if he'd get it."

"Do I?" said the other; "an' what have you to say on the head of it, Bartle?"

"Why, not much," answered Bartle, "only that you ought to've left it betune them; an' that I'll back Misther Costigan agin any rascal that 'ud say there was ever a dhrop of his blood in an Informer's veins."

"I say it for one," replied the other.

"And I, for another," said Connell; "an' what's worse, I'll hould a wager, that if he was searched this minute, you'd find a Kay to Gough in his pocket, although he throws Vosther in my teeth: the dunce never goes widout one. Sure he's not able to set a dacent copy, or headline, or to make a dacent hook, nor a hanger, nor a down stroke, and was a poor scholar, too!"

"I'll give you a down stroke in the mane time, you ignoramus," said the pedagogue, throwing' himself to the end of the table at I which his enemy sat, and laying him along the floor by a single blow.

He was instantly attacked by the friend of the prostrate academician, who was in his turn attacked by the friend of Costigan. The adherents of the respective teachers I were immediately rushing to a general engagement, when the door opened, and Darby More made his appearance.

"Asy!—stop wid yees!—hould back, ye I disgraceful villains!" exclaimed the mendicant, in a thundering voice. "Be asy, I say. Saints in glory! is this the way you're settlin' the dispute between the two dacent young men, that's sorry, both o' them, I'll go bail, for what they done. Sit down, every one o' yez, or, by the blessed ordhers I wear about me, I'll report yez to Father Hoolaghan, an' have yez read out from the althar, or sint to Lough Derg! Sit down, I say!"

As he spoke, he extended his huge cant between the hostile parties, and thrust them one by one to their seats with such muscular energy, that he had them sitting before another blow could be given.

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“Saints in glory!” he exclaimed again, “isn’t this blessed doins an the sacred day that’s in it! that a poor helpless ould man like me can’t come to get somethin’ to take away this misfortunit touch o’ configuration that I’m afflicted wid in cowld weather—that I can’t take a little sup of the only thing that I cures me—widout your ructions and battles! You came here to make pace between two dacent men’s childher, an’ you’re as bad, if not worse, yourselves!—Oh, wurrah dheelish, what’s this! I’m in downright agony! Oh, murder sheery! Has none o’ yez a hand to thry if there’s e’er a dhrop of relief in that bottle? or am I to die all out, in the face o’ the world, for want of a sup o’ somethin’ to warm me?”

“Darby, thry the horn,” said M’Kenna.

“Here, Darby,” said one of them, “dhrink this off, an’ my life for yours, it’ll warm you to the marrow!”

“Och, musha, but I wanted it badly,” replied Darby, swallowing it at once; “it’s the only thing that does me good when I’m this way. *Deah Grasthias!* Oxis Doxis Glorioxis. Amin!”

“I think,” said M’Kenna, “that what’s in the horn’s far afore it.”

“Oh, thin, you thoughtless crathur, if you knew somethin’ I hard about you a while ago, you’d think otherwise. But, indeed, it’s thrue for you; I’m sure I’d be sarry to compare what’s in it to anything o’ the kind I tuck. *Deah Grasthias!* Throth, I’m asier now a great dale nor I was.”

“Will you take another sup, Darby?” inquired the young fellow in whose hands the bottle was now nearly empty; there’s jist about another glass.”

“Indeed, an’ I ‘will, avillish; an’ sure you’ll have my blessin’ for it, an’ barrin’ the priest’s own, you couldn’t have a more luckier one—blessed be God for it—sure that’s well known. In throth, they never came to ill that had it, an’ never did good that got my curse! Hoop! do you hear how that rises the wind off o’ my stomach! Houp!—*Deah Grasthias* for that!”

“How did you larn all the prayers an’ charms you have, Darby?” inquired the bottle-holder.

“It would take me too long to tell you that, avillish! But, childher, now that you’re all together, make it up wid one another. Aren’t you all frinds an’ brothers, sworn brothers, an’ why would you be fightin’ among other? Misther Costigan, give me your hand; sure I heard a thrifle o’ what you were sayin’ while I was suckin’ my dudeen at the fire widout. Come here, Misther Connell. Now, before the saints in glory, I lay my bitter curse an him that refuses to shake hands wid his inimy. There now—I’m proud to see

it. Mike, avourneen, come here—Frank M’Kenna, gustho (\* come hither), walk over here; my bittther heart’s curse upon of yez, if you don’t make up all quarrels this minit! Are you willin, Mike lieillaghan?”

“I have no objection in life,” replied Mike, “if he’ll say that Peggy Gartland won’t be put to any more throuble through his manes.”

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"There's my hand, Mike," said Frank, "that I forget an' forgive all that's past; and in regard to Peggy Gartland, why, as she's so dark agin me, I lave her to you for good."\*

"Well! see what it is to have the good intintions!—to be makin' pace an' friendship atween inimies! That's all I think about, an' nothin' gives me greater pleas—Saints o' glory!—what's this!—Oh wurrah!—that thief of a—wurrah dheelish!—that touch o' configuration's comin' back agin!—O, thin, but it's hard to get it undher!—Oh!"—

"I'm sarry for it, Darby," replied he who held the now empty bottle; "for the whiskey's out."

"Throth, an' I'm sarry myself, for nothin' else does me good; an' Father Hoolaghan says nothin' can keep it down, barrin' the sup o' whiskey. It's best burnt, wid a little bit o' butther an it; but I can't get that always, it overtakes me so suddenly, glory be to God!"

"Well," said M'Kenna, "as Mike an' myself was the manes of bringin' us together, why, if he joins me, we'll have another bottle."

"Throth, an' its fair an' dacent, an' he must do it; by the same a token, that I'll not lave the house till it's dhrunk, for there's no thrustin' yez together, you're so hot-headed an' ready to rise the hand," said Darby.

M'Kenna and Mike, having been reconciled, appeared in a short time warmer friends than ever. While the last bottle went round, those who had before been on the point of engaging in personal conflict, now laughed at their own foibles, and expressed the kindness and good-will which they felt for each other at heart.

"Now," said the mendicant, "go all of you to mass, an' as soon as you can, to confission, for it's not good to have the broken oath an' the sin of it over one. Confiss it, an' have your conscience light: sure it's a happiness that you can have the guilt taken off o' yez, childher."

"Thru for you, Darby," they replied; "an' we'll be thinkin' of your advice."

"Ay, do, childher; an' there's Father Hoolaghan comin' down the road, so, in the name o' Goodness, we haven't a minnit to lose."

They all left the shebeen-house as he spoke except Frank and himself, who remained until they had gone out of hearing.

"Darby," said he, "I want you to come up to our house in the mornin', an' bring along wid you the things that you Stamp the crass upon the skin wid: I'm goin' to get the crucifix put upon me. But on the paril o' your life, don't brathe a word of it to mortal."

“God enable you, avick! it’s a good intintion. I will indeed be up wid you—airly too, wid a blessin’. It is that, indeed—a good intintion, sure enough.”

The parish chapel was about one hundred perches from the shebeen-house in which the “boys” had assembled; the latter were proceeding there in a body when Frank overtook them.

“Mike,” said he aside to Reillaghan, “we’ll have time enough—walk back a bit; I’ll tell you what I’m thinkin’; you never seen in your life a finer day for thracin; what ’ud you say if we give the boys the slip, never heed mass, an’ set off to the mountains?”



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"Won't we have time enough afther mass?" said Reillaghan.

"Why, man, sure you did hear mass once to-day. Weren't you at it last night? No, indeed, we won't be time enough afther it; for this bein' Chris'mas day, we must be home at dinner-time; you know it's not lucky to be from the family upon set days. Hang-an-ouny, come: we'll have fine sport! I have cocksticks \* enough. The best part of the day 'll be gone if we wait for mass. Come, an' let us start."

\* A cockstick was so called from being used on Cock- Monday, to throw at a cook tied to a stake, which was a game common among the people. It was about the length of a common stick, but much heavier and thicker at one end.

"Well, well," replied Reillaghan, "the sorra hair I care; so let us go. I'd like myself to have a rap at the hares in the Black Hills, sure enough; but as it 'ud be remarkable for us to be seen lavin' mass, why let us crass the field here, an' get out upon the road above the bridge."

To this his companion assented, and they both proceeded at a brisk pace, each apparently anxious for the sport, and resolved to exhibit such a frank cordiality of manner as might convince the other that all their past enmity was forgotten and forgiven.

The direct path to the mountains lay by M'Kenna's house, where it was necessary they should call, in order to furnish themselves with cocksticks, and to bring dogs which young Frank kept for the purpose. The inmates of the family were at mass, with the exception of Frank's mother, and Rody, the servant-man, whom they found sitting on his own bed in the barn, engaged at cards, the right hand against the left.

"Well, Rody," said Frank, "who's winnin'?"

"The left entirely," replied his companion: "the divil a game at all the right's gettin', whatever's the rason of it, an' I'm always turnin' up black. I hope none of my friends or acquaintances will die soon."

"Throw them aside—quit of them," said Prank, "give them to me, I'll put them past; an' do you bring us out the gun. I've the powdher an' shot here; we may as well bring her, an' have a slap at them. One o' the officers in the barracks of —— keeps me in powdher an' shot, besides givin' me an odd crown, an' I keep him in game."

"Why, thin, boys," observed Rody, "what's the manin' o' this?—two o' the biggest inimies in Europe last night an' this mornin' an' now as great as two thieves! How does that come?"

"Very asy, Rody," replied Reillaghan; "we made up the quarrel, shuck hands, an's good frinds as ever."

“Bedad, that bates cock-fightin’,” said Body, as he went to bring in the gun.

In the mean time, Prank, with the cards in his hand, went to the eave of the barn, I thrust them up under the thatch, and took out of the same nook a flask of whiskey.

“We’ll want this,” said he, putting it to his lips, and gulping down a portion. “Come Mike, be tastin’; and afterwards i put this in your pocket.”

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Mike followed his example, and was corking the flask when Rody returned with the gun.

"She's charged," said Frank; "but we'd betther put in fresh primin' for 'fraid of her hangin' fire."

He then primed the gun, and handed it to Reillaghan. "Do you keep the gun, Mike," he added, "an' I'll keep the cocksticks. Rody, I'll bet you a shillin' I kill more wid! the cockstick, nor he will wid the gun, will you take me up?"

"I know a safer thrick," replied Rody; "you're a dead aim wid the cockstick, sure enough, an' a deader with the gun, too; catch me at it."

"You show some sinse, for a wondher," observed Frank, as he and his companion left the barn, and turned towards the mountains, which rose frowning behind the house. Rody stood looking after them until they wound up slowly out of sight among the hills; he then shook his head two or three times, and exclaimed, "By dad, there's somethin' in this, if one could make out: what it is. I know Frank."

Christmas-day passed among the peasantry, as it usually passes in Ireland. Friends met before dinner in their own, in their neighbors', in shebeen or in public houses, where they drank, sang, or fought, according to their natural dispositions, or the quantity of liquor they had taken. The festivity of the day might be known by the unusual reek of smoke that danced from each chimney, by the number of persons who crowded the roads, by their bran-new dresses,—for if a young man or country girl can afford a dress at all, they provide it for Christmas,—and by the striking appearance of those who, having drunk a little too much, were staggering home in the purest happiness, singing, stopping their friends, shaking hands with them, or kissing them, without any regard to sex. Many a time might be seen two Irishmen, who had got drunk together, leaving a fair or market, their arms about each other's necks, from whence they only removed them to kiss and hug one another more lovingly. Notwithstanding this, there is nothing more probable than that these identical two will enjoy the luxury of a mutual battle, by way of episode, and again proceed on their way, kissing and hugging as if nothing had happened to interrupt their friendship. All the usual effects of jollity and violence, fun and fighting, love and liquor, were, of course, to be seen, felt, heard, and understood on this day, in a manner much more remarkable than on common occasions; for it maybe observed, that the national festivals of the Irish bring-out their strongest points of character with peculiar distinctness.

The family of Frank M'Kenna were sitting down to their Christmas dinner; the good man had besought a blessing upon the comfortable and abundant fare of which they were about to partake, and nothing was amiss, save the absence of their younger son.

"Musha, where on earth can this boy be stayin'?" said the father: "I'm sure this, above all days in the year, is one he oughn't to be from home an."

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The mother was about to inform him of the son's having gone to the mountains, when the latter returned, breathless, pale, and horror-struck.

Rody eyed him keenly, and laid down the bit he was conveying to his mouth.

"Heavens above us!" exclaimed his mother, "what ails you?"

He only replied by dashing his hat upon the ground, and exclaiming, "Up wid yez!—up wid yez!—quit your dinners! Oh, Rody! what'll be done? Go down to Owen Reillaghan's—go 'way—go down—an' tell thim—Oh, vick-na-hoie! but this was the unfortunate day to us all? Mike reillaghan is shot with my gun; she went off in his hand goin' over a snow wreath, an' he's lyin' dead in the mountains?"

The screams and the wailing which immediately rose in the family were dreadful. Mrs. M'Kenna almost fainted; and the father, after many struggles to maintain his firmness, burst into the bitter tears of disconsolation and affliction. Rody was calmer, but turned his eyes from one to another with a look of deep compassion, and again eyed Frank keenly and suspiciously.

Frank's eye caught his, and the glance which had surveyed him with such a scrutiny did not escape his observation. "Rody," said he, "do you go an' brake it to the, Reillaghans: you're the best to do it; for, when we were settin' out, you saw that he-carried the gun, an' not me."

"Thru for you," said Rody; "I saw that, Frank, and can swear to it; but that's all I did see. I know nothing of what happened in the mountains."

"Damnho sheery orth! (\* Eternal perdition on you!) What do you mane, you villain?" exclaimed Prank, seizing the tongs, and attempting to strike him: "do you dar to suspect that I had any hand in it."

"Wurrah dheelish, Frank," screamed the sisters, "are you goin' to murdher Rody?"

"Murdher," he shouted, in a paroxysm of fury, "Why the curse o' God upon you all, what puts murdher into your heads? Is it my own family that's the first to charge me wid it?"

"Why, there's no one chargin' you wid it," replied Rody; "not one, whatever makes you take it to yourself."

"An' what did you look at me for, thin, the way you did? What did you look at me for, I say?"

"Is it any wondher," replied the servant coolly, "when you had sich a dreadful story to tell?"

“Go off,” replied Frank, now hoarse with passion—“go off! an’ tell the Reillaghans what happened; but, by all the books that ever was opened or shut, if you breathe a word about murdher—about—if you do, you villain, I’ll be the death o’ you!”

When Rody was gone on this melancholy errand, old M’Kenna first put the tongs, and everything he feared might be used as a weapon by his frantic son, out of his reach; he then took down the book on which he had the night before sworn so rash and mysterious an oath, and desired his son to look upon it.

“Frank,” said he, solemnly, “you swore on that blessed book last night, that Mike Reillaghan never would be the husband of Peggy Gartland—he’s a corpse to-day! Yes,” he continued, “the good, the honest, the industrious boy is”—his sobs became so loud and thick that he appeared almost suffocated. “Oh,” said he, “may God pity us! As I hope to meet my blessed Savior, who was born on this day, I would rather you wor the corpse, an’ not Mike Reillaghan!”

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"I don't doubt that," said the son, fiercely; "you never showed me much grah, (\* affection) sure enough."

"Did you ever deserve it?" replied the father. "Heaven above me knows it was too much kindness was showed you. When you ought to have been well corrected, you got your will an' your way, an' now see the upshot."

"Well," said the son, "it's the last day ever I'll stay in the family; thrate me as bad as you please. I'll take the king's bounty, an' list, if I live to see to-morrow."

"Oh, thin, in the name o' Goodness, do so," said the father; "an' so far from previntin' you, we'll bless you when you're gone, for goin'."

"Arrah, Frank, aroon," said Mrs. M'Kenna, who was now recovered, "maybe, afther all, it was only an accident: sure we often hard of sich things. Don't you remimber Squire Elliott's son, that shot himself by accident, out fowlin'? Frank, can you clear yourself before us?"

"Ah, Alley! Alley!" exclaimed the father, wiping away his tears, "don't you remimber his oath, last night?"

"What oath?" inquired the son, with an air of surprise—"What oath, last night? I know I was drunk last night, but I remimber nothing about an oath."

"Do you deny it, you hardened boy?"

"I do deny it; an' I'm not a hardened boy. What do you all mane? do you want to dhrive me mad? I know nothin' about any oath last night," replied the son in a loud voice. The grief of the mother and daughters was loud during the pauses of the conversation. Micaul, the eldest son, sat beside his father in tears.

"Frank," said he, "many an advice I gave you between ourselves, and you know how you tuck them. When you'd stale the oats, an' the meal, and the phaties, an' hay, at night, to have money for your cards an' dhrinkin', I kept it back, an' said nothin' about it. I wish I hadn't done so, for it wasn't for your good: but it was my desire to have, as much pace and quietness as possible."

"Frank," said the father, eyeing him solemnly, "it's possible that you do forget the oath you made last night, for you war in liquor: I would give the wide world that it was thrue. Can you now, in the presence of God, clear yourself of havin' act or part in the death of Mike Reillaghan?"

"What 'ud ail me," said the son, "if I liked?"

“Will you do it now for our satisfaction, an’ take a load of misery off of our hearts? It’s the laste you may do, if you can do it. In the presence of the great God, will you clear yourself now?”

“I suppose,” said the son, “I’ll have to clear myself to-morrow, an’ there’s no use in my doin’ it more that wanst. When the time comes, I’ll do it.”

The father put his hands on his eyes, and groaned aloud: so deep was his affliction, that the tears trickled through his fingers during this fresh burst of sorrow. The son’s refusal to satisfy them renewed the grief of all, as well as of the father: it rose again, louder than before, whilst young Frank sat opposite the door, silent and sullen.

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It was now dark, but the night was calm and agreeable. M'Kenna's family felt the keen affliction which we have endeavored to describe; the dinner was put hastily aside, and the festive spirit peculiar to this night became changed into one of gloom and sorrow. In this state they sat, when the voice of grief was heard loud in the distance; the strong cry of men, broken and abrupt, mingled with the shrieking wail of female lamentation.

The M'Kennas started, and Frank's countenance assumed an expression which it would be difficult to describe. There was, joined to his extreme paleness, a restless, apprehensive, and determined look; each trait apparently struggling for the ascendancy in his character, and attempting to stamp his countenance with its own expression.

"Do you hear that?" said his father. "Oh, musha, Father of heaven, look down an' support that family this night! Frank if you take my advice, you'll lave their sight; for surely if they brain you on the spot, who could blame them?"

"Why ought I lave their sight?" replied Frank. "I tell you all that I had no hand in his death. The gun went off by accident as he was crassin' a wreath o' snow. I was afore him, and when I heard the report, an' turned round, there he lay, shot an' bleedin'. I thought it mightn't signify, but on lookin' at him closely, I found him quite dead. I then ran home, never touchin' the gun at all, till his family and the neighbors 'ud see him. Surely, it's no wondher I'd be distracted in my mind; but that's no rason you should all open upon me as if I had murdered the boy!"

"Well," said the father, "I'm glad to hear you say even that much. I hope it maybe betther wid you than we all think; an' oh! grant it, sweet mother o' Heaven, this day! Now carry yourself quietly afore the people. If they abuse you, don't fly into a passion, but make allowance for their grief and misery."

In the mean time, the tumult was deepening as it approached M'Kenna's house. The report had almost instantly spread through in the village which Reillaghan lived; and the loud cries of his father and brothers, who, in the wildness of their despair, continually called upon his name, had been heard at the houses which lay scattered over the neighborhood. Their inmates, on listening to such unusual sounds, sought the direction from which they proceeded, for it was quite evident that some terrible calamity had befallen the Reillaghans, in consequence of the son's name being borne on the blasts of night with such loud and overwhelming tones of grief and anguish. The assembly, on reaching M'Kenna's, might, therefore, be numbered at thirty, including the females of Reillaghan's immediate family, who had been strung by the energy of despair to a capability of bearing any fatigue, or rather to an utter insensibility of all bodily suffering.

We must leave the scene which ensued to the reader's imagination, merely observing, that as neither the oath which young Frank had taken on the preceding night, nor indeed the peculiar bitterness of his enmity towards the deceased, was known by the



Reillaghans, they did not, therefore, discredit the account of his death which they had heard.

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Their grief was exclamatory and full of horror: consisting of prolonged shrieks on the part of the women, and frantic howlings on that of the men. The only words they uttered were his name, with epithets and ejaculations. *Oh a Vichaul dheelish—a Vichaul dheelish—a bouchal bane machree—wuil thu marra—wuil thu marra?* “Oh, Michael, the beloved—Michael, the beloved—fair boy of our heart—are you dead?—are you dead?” From M’Kenna’s the crowd, at the head of which was Darby More, proceeded towards the mountains, many of them bearing torches, such as had been used on their way to the Midnight Mass. The moon had disappeared, the darkness was deepening, and the sky was overhung with black heavy clouds, that gave a stormy character to scenery in itself re wild and gloomy.

Young M’Kenna and the pilgrim led them to the dreary waste in which the corpse lay. It was certainly an awful spectacle to behold these unhappy people toiling up the mountain solitude at such an hour, their convulsed faces thrown into striking relief by the light of the torches, and their cries rising in wild irregular cadences upon the blast which swept over them with a dismal howl, in perfect character with their affliction, and the circumstances which produced it.

On arriving within view of the corpse, there was a slight pause; for, notwithstanding the dreadful paroxysms of their grief, there was something still more startling and terrible in contemplating the body thus stretched out in the stillness of death, on the lonely mountain. The impression it produced was peculiarly solemn: the grief was hushed for a moment, but only for a moment; it rose again wilder than before, and in a few minutes the friends of Reillaghan were about to throw themselves upon the body, under the strong impulse of sorrow and affection.

The mendicant, however, stepped forward “Hould back,” said he; “it’s hard to ax yez to do it, but still you must. Let the neighbors about us here examine the body, in order to see whether it mightn’t be possible that the dacent boy came by his death from somebody else’s hand than his own. Hould forrid the lights,” said he, “till we see how he’s lyin’, an’ how the gun’s lyin’.”

“Darby,” said young Frank, “I can’t but be oblaged to you for that. You’re the last man livin’ ought to say what you said, afther you seein’ us both forget an’ forgive this day. I call upon you now to say whether you didn’t see him an’ me shakin’ hands, and buryin’ all bad feelin’ between us?”

“I’ll spake to you jist now,” replied the mendicant. “See here, neighbors, obsarve this; the boy was shot in the breast, an’ here’s not a snow wreath, but a weeshy dhrift that a child ’ud step across widout an accident. I tell you all, that I suspect foul play in this.”

“Hell’s fire,” exclaimed the brother of the deceased, “what’s that you say? What! Can it be—can it—can it—that you murdhered him, you villain, that’s known to be nothin’ but a villain? But I’ll do for you!” He snatched at the gun as he spoke, and would probably

have taken ample and fearful vengeance upon Frank, had not the mendicant and others prevented him.

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"Have sinse," said Darby; "this is not the way to behave, man; lave the gun lyin' where she is, till we see more about us. Stand back there, an' let me look at these marks: ay, about five yards—there's the track of feet about five yards before him—here they turn about, an' go back. Here, Savior o' the world! see here! the mark, clane an' clear, of the butt o' the gun! Now if that boy stretched afore us had the gun in his hand the time she went off, could the mark of it be here? Bring me down the gun—an' the curse o' God upon her for an unlucky thief, whoever had her! It's thrue!—it's too thrue!" he continued—"the man that had the gun stood on this spot."

"It's a falsity," said Frank; "it's a damnable falsity. Rody Teague, I call upon you to spake for me. Didn't you see, when we went out to the hills, that it was Mike carried the gun, an' not me?"

"I did," replied Rody. "I can swear to that."

"Ay," exclaimed Prank, with triumph; "an' you yourself, Darby, saw us, as I said, makin' up whatsomever little differences there was betwixt us."

"I did," replied the mendicant, sternly; "but I heard you say, no longer ago than last night—say!—why you swhore it, man alive!—that if you wouldn't have Peggy Gartland, he never should. In your own stable I heard it, an' I was the manes of disappointin' you an' your gang, when you thought to take away the girl by force. You're well known too often to carry a fair face when the heart under it is black wid you."

"All I can say is," observed young Reillaghan, "that if it comes out agin you that you played him foul, all the earth won't save your life; I'll have your heart's blood, if I should hang for it a thousand times."

This dialogue was frequently interrupted by the sobbings and clamor of the women, and the detached conversation of some of the men, who were communicating to each other their respective opinions upon the melancholy event which had happened.

Darby More now brought Reillaghan's father aside, and thus addressed him:—

"Gluntho! (\* Listen)—to tell God's thruth, I've sthrong suspicions that your son was murdhered. This sacred thing that I put the crass upon people's breast wid, saves people from hangin' an' unnatural deaths. Frank spoke to me last night, no longer ago, to come up an' mark it an' him to-morrow. My opinion is, that he intinded to murdher him at that time, an' wanted to have a protection agin what might happen to him in regard o' the black deed."

"Can we prove it agin him?" inquired the disconsolate father: "I know it'll be hard, as there was no one present but themselves; an' if he did it, surely he'll not confess it."

“We may make him do it maybe,” said the mendicant; “the villain’s asily frightened, an’ fond o’ charms an’ pisthrogues,\* an’ sich holy things, for all his wickedness. Don’t say a word. We’ll take him by, surprise; I’ll call upon him to touch the corpse. Make them women—an’ och, it’s hard to expect it—make them stop clappin’ their hands an’ cryin’; an’ let there be a dead silence, if you can.”

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During this and some other observations made by Darby, Frank had got the gun in his possession; and, whilst seeming to be engaged in looking at it, and examining the lock, he actually contrived to reload it without having been observed.

"Now, neighbors," said Darby, "hould your tongues for a weeshy start, till I ax Frank M'Kenna a question or two. Frank M'Kenna, as you hope to meet God, at Judgment, did you take his life that's lyin' a corpse before us'?"

"I did not," replied M'Kenna; "I could clear myself on all the books in Europe, that he met his death as I tould you; an' more nor that," he added, dropping upon his knees, and uncovering his head, "may I die widout priest or prayer—widout help, hope, or happiness, upon the spot where he's now stretched, if I murdhered or shot him."

"I say amin to that," replied Darby; "Oxis Doxis Glorioxis!—So far, that's right, if the blood of him's not an you. But there's one thing more to be done: will you walk over undher the eye of God, an' touch the corpse? Hould back, neighbors, an' let him come over alone: I an' Owen Reillaghan will stand here wid the lights, to see if the corpse bleeds."

"Give me, too, a light," said M'Kenna's father; "my son must get fair play, anyway: must be a witness myself to it, an' will, too."

"It's but rasonable," said Owen Reillaghan; "come over beside Darby an' myself: I'm willin' that your son should stand or fall by what'll happen."

Frank's father, with a taper in his hand, immediately went, with a pale face and trembling steps, to the place appointed for him beside the corpse, where he took his stand.

When young M'Kenna heard Darby's last question he seemed as if seized by an inward spasm: the start which he gave, and his gaspings for breath, were visible to all present. Had he seen the spirit of the murdered man before him, his horror could not have been greater; for this ceremony had been considered a most decisive test in cases of suspicion of murder—an ordeal, indeed, to which few murderers wished to submit themselves. In addition to this we may observe, that Darby's knowledge of the young man's character was correct; with all his crimes he was weak-minded and superstitious.

He stood silent for some time after the ordeal had been proposed to him; his hair became literally erect, with the dread of this formidable scrutiny, his cheeks turned white, and the cold perspiration fell from him in large drops. All his strength appeared to have departed from him; he stood, as if hesitating, and even energy necessary to stand seemed to be the result of an effort.



“Remember,” said Darby, pulling out the large crucifix which was attached to his heads, “that the eye of God is upon you. If you’ve committed the murdher, thrimble; if not, Frank, you’ve little to fear in touchin’ the corpse.”

Frank had not uttered a word; but, leaning himself on the gun, he looked wildly around him, cast his eyes up to the stormy sky, then turned them with a dead glare upon the corpse and the crucifix.

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"Do you confiss the murdher?" said Darby.

"Murdher!" rejoined Frank: "no! I confess no murdher: you villain, do you want to make me guilty;—do you want to make me guilty, you deep villain?"

It seemed as if the current of his thoughts and feelings had taken a new direction, though it is probable that the excitement which appeared to be rising within him was only the courage of fear.

"You all wish to find me guilty," he added: "but I'll show you that I'm not guilty."

He immediately walked towards the corpse, and stooping down, touched the body with one hand, holding the gun in the other. The interest of that moment was intense, and all eyes were strained towards the spot. Behind the corpse, at each shoulder—for the body lay against a small snow-wreath, in a recumbent position—stood the father of the deceased and the father of the accused, each wound up by feelings of a directly opposite character to a pitch of dreadful excitement over them, in his fantastic dress and white beard, stood the tall mendicant, who held up his crucifix to Frank, with an awful menace upon his strongly marked countenance. At a little distance to the left of the body stood other men who were assembled, having their torches held aloft in their hands, and their forms bent towards the corpse, their laces indicating expectation, dread, and horror. The female relations of the deceased nearest his remains, their torches extended in the same direction, their visages exhibiting the passions of despair and grief in their wildest characters, but as if arrested by some supernatural object immediately before their eyes, that produced a new and more awful feeling than grief. When the body was touched, Frank stood as if himself bound by a spell to the spot. At length he turned his eyes to the mendicant, who stood silent and motionless, with the crucifix still extended in his hand.

"Are you satisfied now?" said he.

"That's wanst," said the pilgrim: "you're to touch it three times."

Frank hesitated a moment, but immediately stooped again, and touched it twice in succession; but it remained still and unchanged as before! His father broke the silence by a fervent ejaculation of thanksgiving to God for the vindication of his son's character which he had just witnessed.

"Now!" exclaimed M'Kenna, in a loud, exulting tone, "you all see that I did not murdher him!"

"You did!" said a voice, which was immediately recognized to be that of the deceased.



M’Kenna shrieked aloud, and immediately fled with his gun towards the mountains, pursued by Reillaghan’s other son. The crowd rushed in towards the body, whilst sorrow, affright, exultation, and wonder, marked the extraordinary scene which ensued.

“Queen o’ Heaven!” exclaimed old M’Kenna, “who could believe this only they hard it?”

“The murdher wouldn’t lie?” shrieked out Mrs. Reillaghan—“the murdher wouldn’t lie!—the blood o’ my darlin’ son spoke it!—his blood spoke it; or God, or his angel, spoke it for him!”

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"It's beyant anything ever known!" some exclaimed, "to come back an' tell the deed upon his murdherer! God presarve us, an' save us, this night! I wish we wor at home out o' this wild place!"

Others said they had heard of such things; but this having happened before their own eyes, surpassed anything that could be conceived.

The mendicant now advanced, and once more mysteriously held up his crucifix.

"Keep silence!" said he, in a solemn, sonorous voice: "Keep silence, I say, an' kneel I down all o' yez before what I've in my hand. If you want to know who or what the voice came from, I can tell yez:—it was the crucifix THAT SPOKE!"

This communication was received with a feeling of devotion too deep for words. His injunction was instantly complied with: they knelt, and bent down in worship before it in the mountain wilds.

"Ay," said he, "little ye know the virtues of that crucifix! It was consecrated by a friar so holy that it was well known there was but the shadow of him upon the earth, the other part of him bein' night an' day in heaven among the archangels. It shows the power of this Crass, any way; an you may tell your frinds, that I'll sell bades touched wid it to the faithful at sixpence apiece. They can be put an your padareens as Dicades, wid a blessin'. Oxis Doxis Glorioxis—Amin! Let us now bear the corpse home, antil it's dressed and laid out dacently as it ought to be."

The body was then placed upon an easy litter, formed of great-coats buttoned together, and supported by the strongest men present, who held it one or two at each corner. In this manner they advanced at a slow pace, until they reached Owen Reillaghan's house, where they found several of the country-people assembled, waiting for their return.

It was not until the body had been placed in an inner room, where none were admitted until it should be laid out, that the members of the family first noticed the prolonged absence of Reillaghan's other son. The moment it had been alluded to, they were seized with new alarm and consternation.

"*Hanim an diouol!*" said Reillaghan, bitterly, in Irish, "but I doubt the red-handed villain has cut short the lives of my two brave sons! I only hope he may stop in the country: I'm not widout friends an' followers that 'ud think it no sin in a just cause to pay him in his own coin, an' to take from him an' his a pound o' blood for every ounce of ours they shed."

A number of his friends instantly volunteered to retrace their way to the mountains, and search for the other son. "There's little danger of his life," said a relation; "it's a short

time Frank 'ud stand him particularly as the gun wasn't charged. We'll go, at any rate, for 'fraid he might lose himself in the mountains, or walk into some o' the lochs on his way home. We had as good bring some whiskey wid us, for he may want it badly."

While they had been speaking, however, the snow began to fall and the wind to blow in a manner that promised a heavy and violent storm. They proceeded, notwithstanding, on their search, and on whistling for the dog, discovered that he was not to be found.

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“He went wid us to the mountains, I know,” said the former speaker; “an’ I think it likely he’ll be found wid Owen, wherever he is. Come, boys, step out: it’s a dismal night, any way, the Lord knows.

“Och, och!” And with sorrowful but vigorous steps they went in quest of the missing brother.

Nothing but the preternatural character of the words which Were so mysteriously pronounced immediately before Owen’s pursuit of M’Kenna, could have prevented that circumstance, together with the flight of the latter, from exciting greater attention among the crowd. His absence, however, now that they had time to reflect on it, produced unusual alarm, not only on account of M’Kenna’s bad character, but from the apprehension of Owen being lost in the mountains.

The inextinguishable determination of revenge with which an Irishman pursues any person who, either directly or indirectly, takes the life of a near relation, or invades the peace of his domestic affections, was strongly illustrated by the nature of Owen’s pursuit after M’Kenna, considering the appalling circumstances under which he undertook it. It is certainly more than probable that M’Kenna, instead of flying would have defended himself with the loaded gun, had not his superstitious fears been excited by the words which so mysteriously charged him with the murder. The direction he accidentally took led both himself and his pursuer into the wildest recesses of the mountains. The chase was close and desperate, and certainly might have been fatal to Reillaghan, had M’Kenna thought of using the gun. His terror, however, exhausted him, and overcame his presence of mind to such a degree, that so far from using the weapon in his defence, he threw it aside, in order to gain ground upon his pursuer. This he did but slowly, and the pursuit was as yet uncertain. At length Owen found the distance between himself and his brother’s murderer increasing; the night was dark, and he himself feeble and breathless: he therefore gave over all hope of securing him, and returned to follow those who had accompanied him to the spot where his brother’s body lay. It was when retracing his path that the nature of his situation occurred to him: the snow had not began to fall, but the appearance of the sky was strongly calculated to depress him.

Every person knows with what remarkable suddenness snow storms descend. He had scarcely advanced homewards more than twenty minutes, when the gray tempest spread its dusky wings over the heavens, and a darker shade rapidly settled upon the white hills—now becoming indistinct in the gloom of the air, which was all in commotion, and groaned aloud with the noise of the advancing storm. When he saw the deep gloom, and felt the chilling coldness pierce his flesh so bitterly, he turned himself in the direction which led by the shortest possible line towards his father’s house. He was at this time nearly three miles from any human habitation; and as he looked into the darkness, his heart began to palpitate with an alarm almost bordering on hopelessness.

His dog, which had, up till this boding' change, gone on before him, now partook in his master's apprehensions, and trotted anxiously at his feet.

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In the meantime the winds howled in a melancholy manner along the mountains, and carried with them from the upper clouds the rapidly descending sleet. The storm-current, too, was against him, and as the air began to work in dark confusion, he felt for the first time how utterly helpless a thing he was under the fierce tempest in this dreadful solitude.

A length the rushing sound which he first heard in the distance approached him in all its terrors; and in a short time he was staggering, like a drunken man, under the incessant drifts which swept over him and about him. Nothing could exceed the horrors of the atmosphere at this moment. From the surface of the earth the whirlwinds swept immense snow-clouds that rose up instantaneously, and shot off along the brows and ravines of the solitary wild, sometimes descending into the valleys, and again rushing up the almost perpendicular sides of the mountains, with a speed, strength, and noise, that mocked at everything possessing life; whilst in the air the tumult and the darkness continued to deepen in the most awful manner. The winds seemed to meet from every point of the compass, and the falling drifts flew backward and forward in every direction; the cold became intense, and Owen's efforts to advance homewards were beginning to fail. He was driven about like an autumn leaf, and his dog, which kept close to him, had nearly equal difficulty in proceeding. No sound but that of the tempest could now be heard, except the screaming of the birds as they were tossed on sidewing through the commotion which prevailed. In this manner was Owen whirled about, till he lost all knowledge of his local situation, being ignorant whether he advanced towards home or otherwise. His mouth and eyes were almost filled with driving sleet; sometimes a' cloud of light sandlike drift would almost bury him, as it crossed, or followed, or opposed his path; sometimes he would sink to the middle in a snow-wreath, from which he extricated himself with great difficulty; and among the many terrors by which he was beset, that of walking into a lake, or over a precipice, was not the least paralyzing. Owen was a young man of great personal strength and activity, for the possession of which, next to his brother, he had been distinguished among his companions; but he now became totally exhausted; the chase after M'Kenna, his former exertion, his struggles, his repeated falls, his powerful attempts to get into the vicinity of life, the desperate strength he put forth in breaking through the vortex of the whirlwind, all had left him faint, and completely at the mercy of the elements.

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The cold sleet scales were now frozen to ice on his cheeks; his clothes were completely incrustated with the hard snow, which had been beating into them by the strength of the blast, and his joints were getting stiff and benumbed. The tumult of the tempest, the whirling of the snow-clouds, and the thick snow, now falling, and again tossed upwards by sudden gusts to the sky, deprived him of all power of reflection, and rendered him, though not altogether blind or deaf, yet incapable of forming any distinct opinion upon what he saw or heard. Still, actuated by the unconscious principle of self preservation, he tottered on, cold, feeble, and breathless, now driven back like a reed by the strong rush of the storm, or prostrated almost to suffocation under the whirlwinds, that started up like savage creatures of life about him.

During all this time his faithful dog never abandoned him; but his wild howlings only heightened the horrors of his situation. When he fell, the affectionate creature would catch the flap of his coat, or his arm, in his teeth, and attempt to raise him; and as long as his master had presence of mind, with the unerring certainty of instinct, he would turn him, when taking a wrong direction, into that which led homewards.

Owen was not, however, reduced to this state without experiencing sensations of which no language could convey adequate notions. At first he struggled heroically with the storm; but when utter darkness threw its impervious shades over the desolation around him, and the fury of the elements grew so tremendous, all the strong propensities to life became roused, the convulsive throes of a young heart on the steep of death threw a wild and corresponding energy into his vigorous frame, and occasioned him to cling to existence with a tenacity rendered still stronger by the terrible consciousness of his unprepared state, and the horror of being plunged into eternity unsupported by the rites of his church, whilst the crime of attempting to take away human life lay on his soul. Those domestic affections, too, which in Irishmen are so strong, became excited; his home, his fireside, the faces of his kindred, already impressed with affliction for the death of one brother, were conjured up in the powerful imagery of natural feeling, the fountains of which were opened in his heart, and his agonizing cry for life rose wildly from the mountain desert upon the voice of the tempest. Then, indeed, when the gulf of a twofold death yawned before him, did the struggling spirit send up its shrieking prayer to heaven with desperate impulse. These struggles, however, as well as those of the body, became gradually weaker as the storm tossed him about, and with the chill of its breath withered him into total helplessness. He reeled on, stiff and insensible, without knowing whither he went, falling with every blast, and possessing scarcely any faculty of life except mere animation.

After about an hour, however, the storm subsided, and the clouds broke away into light, fleecy columns before the wind; the air, too, became less cold, and the face of nature more visible. The driving sleet and hard, granular snow now ceased to fall; but were succeeded by large feathery flakes, that descended slowly upon the still air.

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Had this trying scene lasted much longer, Owen must soon have been a stiffened corpse. The child-like strength, however, which just enabled him to bear up without sinking in despair to die, now supported him when there was less demand for energy. The dog, too, by rubbing itself against him, and licking his face, enabled him, by a last effort, to recollect himself, so as to have a glimmering perception of his situation. His confidence returned, and with a greater degree of strength. He shook, as well as he could, the snow from his 'clothes, where it had accumulated heavily, and felt himself able to proceed, slowly, it is true, towards his father's house, which he had nearly reached when he met his friends, who were once: more hurrying out to the mountains in quest of him, having been compelled to return in consequence of the storm, when they had first set out. The whiskey, their companionship, and their assistance soon revived him. One or two were despatched home before them, to apprise the afflicted family of his safety; and the intelligence was hailed with melancholy joy by the Reillaghans. A faint light played for a moment over the gloom which had settled among them, but it was brief; for on ascertaining the safety of their second son, their grief rushed back with renewed violence, and nothing could be heard but the voice of sorrow and affliction.

Darby More, who had assumed the control of the family, did everything in his power to console them; his efforts, however, were viewed with a feeling little short of indignation.

"Darby," said the afflicted mother, "you have, under God, in some sense, my fair son's death to account for. You had a dhrame, but you wouldn't tell it to us. If you had, my boy might be livin' this day, for it would be asy for him to be an his guard."

"Musha, poor woman," replied Darby, "sure you don't know, you afflicted crathur, what you're spakin' about. Tell my dhrame! Why, thin, it's myself towld it to him from beginning to ind, and that whin we wor goin' to mass this day itself. I desired him, on the paril of his life, not to go out a tracin' or toards the mountains, good or bad."

"You said you had a prayer that 'ud keep it back," observed the mother, "an' why didn't you say it?"

"I did say it," replied Darby, "an' that afore a bit crassed my throath this mornin'; but, you see, he broke his promise of not goin' to the mountains, an' that was what made the dhrame come thrue."

"Well, well, Darby, I beg your pardon, an' God's pardon, for judgin' you in the wrong. Oh, wurrah sthrue! my brave son, is it there you're lyin' wid us, avourneen machree!" and she again renewed her grief.

"Oh, thin, I'm sure I forgive you," said Darby: "but keep your grief in for a start, till I say the *De Prowhinjis* over him, for the pace an' repose of his sowl. Kneel down all of yez."



He repeated this prayer in language which it would require one of Edward Irving's adepts in the Unknown Tongues to interpret. When he had recited about half of it, Owen, and those who had gone to seek him, entered the house, and after the example of the others, reverently knelt down until he finished it.

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Owen's appearance once more renewed their grief. The body of his brother had been removed to a bed beyond the fire in the kitchen; and when Owen looked upon the features of his beloved companion, he approached, and stooped down to kiss his lips. He was still too feeble, however, to bend by his own strength; and it is also probable that the warm air of the house relaxed him. Be this, however, as it may, he fell forward, but supported himself by his hands, which were placed upon the body; a deep groan was heard, and the apparently dead man opened his eyes, and feebly exclaimed—"A dhrink? a dhrink!"

Darby More, had, on concluding the *De profundus*, seated himself beside the bed on which Mike lay; but on hearing the groan, and the call for drink, he leaped rapidly to: his legs and exclaimed, "My sowl to hell an' the divil, Owen Reillaghan, but your son's alive!! Off wid two or three of yez, as the divil can dhrive yez, for the priest an' docthor!! Off wid yez! ye damned spalpeens, aren't ye near there by this! Give us my cant! Are yez gone? Oh, by this and by that—hell—eh—aren't yez—" But ere he could finish the sentence, they had set chit.

"Now," he exclaimed in a voice whose tremendous tones were strongly at variance with his own injunctions—"Now, neighbors, d—n yez, keep silence. Mrs. Reillaghan, get a bottle of whiskey an' a mug o' wather. Make haste. Hanim an diouol! don't be all night!"

The poor mother, however, could not stir; the unexpected revulsion of feeling which she had so suddenly experienced was more than she could sustain. A long fainting-fit! was the consequence, and Darby's commands were obeyed by the wife of a friendly neighbor.

The mendicant immediately wetted Mike's lips, and poured some spirits, copiously diluted with water, down his throat; after which he held the whiskey-bottle, like a connoisseur, between himself and the light. "I hope," said he, "this whiskey is the raal crathur." He put the bottle to his mouth as he spoke, and on holding it a second time before his eye, he shook his head complacently—"Ay," said he, "if anything could bring the dead back to this world, my sowl to glory, but that would. Oh, thin, it would give the dead life, sure enough!" He put it once more to his lips, from which it was not separated without relinquishing a considerable portion of its contents.

"Dhea Grashthias!" he exclaimed; "throth, I find myself, the betther o' that sup, in regard that it's good for this touch 'o' configuration that I'm throubled wid inwardly! Doxis Doxis Glorioxis? Amin!" These words he spoke in a low, placid voice, lest the wounded man might be discomposed by his observations.

The rapidity with which the account of Mike's restoration to life spread among the neighbors was surprising. Those who had gone for the priest and doctor communicated to all they met, and these again to others: that in a short time the house was

surrounded by great numbers of their acquaintances, all anxious to hear the particulars more minutely.

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Darby, who never omitted an opportunity of impressing the people with a belief in his own sanctity, and in that of his crucifix came out among them, and answered their inquiries by a solemn shake of his head, and a mysterious indication of his finger to the crucifix, but said nothing more. This was enough. The murmur of reverence and wonder spread among them, and ere long there were few present who did not believe that Reillaghan had been restored to life by a touch of Darby's crucifix; an opinion which is not wholly exploded until this day.

Peggy Gartland, who fortunately had not heard the report of her lover's death until it was contradicted by the account of his revival, now entered, and by her pale countenance betrayed strong symptoms of affection and sympathy. She sat by his side, gazing mournfully on his features, and with difficulty suppressed her tears.

For some time before her arrival, the mother and sisters of Mike had been removed to another room, lest the tumultuous expression of their mingled joy and sorrow might disturb him. The fair, artless girl, although satisfied that he still lived, entertained no hopes of his recovery; but she ventured, in a low, trembling voice, to inquire from Darby some particulars of the melancholy transaction which was likely to deprive her of her betrothed husband.

"Where did the shot sthrike him, Darby?"

"Clane through the body, avillish; jist where Captain Cramer was shot at the battle o' Bunker's Hill, where he lay as good as dead for twelve hours, and was near bein' berried a corp, an' him alive all the time, only that as they were pullin' him off o' the cart, he gev a shout, an' thin, a colleen dhas, they began to think he might be livin' still. Sure enough, he was, too, an' lived successfully, till he died wid dhrinkin' brandy, as a cure for the gout; the Lord be praised!"

"Where's the villain, Darby?"

"He's in the mountains, no doubt, where he had thim to fight wid that's a match for him—God, an' the dark storm that fell awhile agone. They'll pay him, never fear, for his thrachery to the noble boy that chastised him for your sake, acushla oge! (\* my young pulse) sthrong was your hand, a Veehal, an' ginerous was your affectionate heart; an' well you loved the fair girl that's sitting beside you! Throth, Peggy, my heart's black with sarrow about the darlin' young man. Still, life's in him; an' while there's life there's hope; glory be to God!"

The eulogium of the pilgrim, who was, in truth, much attached to Mike, moved the heart of the affectionate girl, whose love and sympathy were pure as the dew on the grass-blade, and now as easily affected by the slightest touch. She remained silent for a time, but secretly glided her hand towards that of her lover, which she clasped in hers, and by a gentle and timid pressure, strove to intimate to him that she was beside him. Long,

but unavailing, was the struggle to repress her sorrow; her bosom heaved; she gave two or three loud sobs, and burst into tears and lamentations.

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"Don't cry, avourneen," whispered Darby—"Don't cry; I'll warrant you that Darby More will ate share of your weddin' dinner an' his, yit. There's a small taste of color comin' to his face, which, I think, undher God, is owin' to my touchin' him wid the cruciwhix. Don't cry, a colleen, he'll get over it an' more than it, yit, a colleen bawn!"

Darby then hurried her into the room where Mike's mother and sisters were. On entering she threw herself into the arms of the former, laid her face on her bosom, and wept bitterly. This renewed the mother's grief: she clasped the interesting girl in a sorrowful embrace; so did his sisters. They threw themselves into each other's arms, and poured forth those touching, but wild bursts of pathetic language, which are always heard when the heart is struck by some desolating calamity.

"Husht!" said a neighboring man who was present; "husht! it's a shame for yez, an' the boy not dead yit."

"I'm not ashamed," said Peggy: "why should I be ashamed of bein' sarry for the likes of Mike Reillaghan? Where was his aquil? Wasn't all hearts upon him? Didn't the very poor on the road bless him whin he passed? Who ever had a bad word agin him, but the villain that murdhered him? Murdhered him! Heaven above! an' why? For my sake! For my sake the pride of the parish is laid low! Ashamed! Is it for cryin' for my betrothed husband, that was sworn to me, an' I to him, before the eye of God above us? This day week I was to be his bride; an' now—now—Oh, Vread Reillaghan, take me to you! Let me go to his mother! My heart's broke, Vread Reillaghan! Let me go to her: nobody's grief for him is like ours. You're his mother, an' I'm his wife in the sight o' God. Proud was I out of him: my eyes brightened when they seen him, an' my heart got light when I heard his voice; an' now, what's afore me?—what's afore me but sorrowful days an' a broken heart!"

Mrs. Reillaghan placed her tenderly and affectionately beside her, on the bed whereon she herself sat. With the corner of her handkerchief she wiped the tears from the weeping girl, although her own flowed fast. Her daughters, also, gathered about her, and in language of the most endearing kind, endeavored to soothe and console her.

"He may live yet, Peggy, avourneen," said his mother; "my brave and noble son may live yet, an' you may be both, happy! Don't be cryin' so much, *asthore galh machree* (\* The beloved white (girl) of my heart); sure he's in the hands o' God avourneen; an' your young heart won't be broke, I hope. Och, the Lord pity her young feelins!" exclaimed the mother affected even by the consolation she herself offered to the betrothed bride of her son: "is it any whundher she'd sink undher sich a blow! for, sure enough, where was the likes of him? No, asthore; it's no wondher—it's no wondher! Lonesome will your heart be widout him; for I know what he'd feel if a hair of your head was injured."

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"Oh, I know it—I know it! There was music in his voice, an' grah and. kindness to every crathur on God's earth; but to me—to me—oh, no one knew his love to me, but myself an' God. Oh, if I was dead, that I couldn't feel this, or if my life could save his! Why didn't the villain,—the black villain, wid God's curse upon him—why didn't he shoot me, thin I could never be Mike's wife, an' his hand o' murdher might be satisfied? If he had, I wouldn't feel as I do. Ay! the warmest, an' the best, an' the dearest blood of my heart, I could shed for him. That heart was his, an' he had a right to it. Our love wasn't of yisterday: afore the links of my hair came to my showlldhers I loved him, an' thought of him; an many a time he tould me that I was his first! God knows he was my first, an' he will be my last, let him live or die."

"Well, but, Peggy achora," said his sister, "maybe it's sinful to be cryin' this way, an' he not dead."

"God forgive me, if it's a sin," replied Peggy; "I'd not wish to do anything sinful or displasin' to God; an' I'll sthrive to keep down my grief: I will, as well as I can."

She put her hands on her face, and by all effort of firmness, subdued the tone of her grief to a low, continuous murmur of sorrow.

"An' along wid that," said the sister, "maybe the noise is disturbin' him. Darby put us all out o' the kitchen to have pace an' quietness about him."

"An' 'twas well thought o' Darby," she replied; "an' may the blessin' o' God rest upon him for it! A male's mate or a nights lodgin' he'll never want under my father's roof for that goodness to him. I'll be quiet."

There was now a short pause, during which those in the room heard a smack, accompanied by the words, "Dheah. Grashthias! throth I'm the betther o' that sup, so I am. Nothin' keeps this thief of a configuration down but it. Dheah Grashthias for that! Oh, thin, this is the stuff! It warms the body to the top o' the nails!"

"Don't spare it, Darby," said old Reillaghan, "if it does you good."

"Avourneen," said Darby, "it's only what gives me a little relief I ever take, jist by way of cure, for it's the only thing does me good, when I am this-a-way."

Several persons in the neighborhood were, in the mean time, flocking to Reillaghan's house. A worthy man, accompanied by his wife, entered as the pilgrim had concluded. The woman, in accordance with the custom of the country, raised the Irish cry, in a loud melancholy wail, that might be heard at a great distance.

Darby, who prided himself on maintaining silence, could not preserve the consistency of his character upon this occasion, any more than on that of Mike's recent symptoms of life.

“Your sowl to the divil, you faggot!” he exclaimed, “what do you mane? The divil whip the tongue out o’ you! are you going to come here only to disturb the boy that’s not dead yet? Get out o’ this, an’ be asy wid your skhreechin’, or by the crass that died for us, only you’re a woman, I’d tumble you wid a lick o’ my cant. Keep asy, you vagrant, an’ the dacent boy not dead yet. Hell bellows you, what do you mane?”



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"Not dead!" exclaimed the woman, with her body bent in the proper attitude, her hands extended, and the crying face turned with amazement to Darby. "Not dead! Wurrah, man alive, isn't he murdered?"

"Hell resave the matther for that!" replied Darby. "I tell you he's livin' an' will live I hope, barrin' your skirlin' dh rives the life that's in him out of him. Go into the room there to the women, an' make yourself scarce out o' this, or by the padareens about me, I'll malivogue you."

"We can't be angry wid the dacent woman," observed old Reillaghan, "in regard that she came to show her friendship and respect."

"I'd be angry wid St. Pettier," said Darby, "an' 'ud not scruple to give him a lick o' my c — Lord presarve us! what was I goin' o say! Why, throth, I believe the little wits I had are all gone a shaughran! I must fast a Friday or two for the same words agin St. Pether. Oxis Doxis Glorioxis—Amin."

Hope is strong in love and in life. Peggy, now that grief had eased her heart of its load of accumulated sorrow, began to reflect upon Darby's anecdote of Captain Cramer, which she related to those about her. They all rejoiced to hear that it was possible to be wounded so severely and live. They also consoled and supported each other, and expressed their trust that Mike might also recover. The opinion of the doctor was waited for with such anxiety as a felon feels when the foreman of the jury hands down the verdict which consigns him to life or death.

Whether Darby's prescription was the result of chance or sagacity we know not. We are bound, however, to declare that Reillaghan's strength was in some degree restored, although the pain he suffered amounted to torture. The surgeon (who was also a physician, and, moreover, supplied his own medicines) and the priest, as they lived in the same town, both arrived together. The latter administered the rites of his church to him; and the former, who was a skilful man, left nothing undone to accomplish his restoration to health. He had been shot through the body with a bullet—a circumstance which was not known until the arrival of the surgeon. This gentlemen expressed much astonishment at his surviving the wound, but said that circumstances of a similar nature had occurred, particularly on the field of battle, although he admitted that they were few.

Darby, however, who resolved to have something like a decided opinion from him, without at all considering whether such a thing was possible, pressed him strongly upon the point.

"Arrah, blur-an-age, Docthor Swither, say one thing or other. Is he to live or die? Plain talk, Docthor, is all we want, an' no *feasthalagh* (\* nonsense)."

“The bullet, I am inclined to think,” replied the Doctor, “must either not have touched a vital part, or touched it only slightly. I have known cases similar, it is true; but it is impossible for me to pronounce a decisive opinion upon him just now.”

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"The divil resave the *yarrib*\* ever I'll gather for you agin, so long as my name's Darby More, except you say either 'life' or 'death,'" said Darby, who forgot his character of sanctity altogether.

\* Herb-Men of Darby's cast were often in the habit of collecting rare medicinal plants for the apothecaries; and not bad botanists some of them were.

"Darby, achora," said Mrs. Reillaghan, "don't crass the gintleman, an' him sthivin' to do his best. Here, Paddy Gormly, bring some wather till the docthor washes his hands."

"Darby," replied the Doctor, to whom he was well known, "you are a good herbalist, but even although you should not serve me as usual in that capacity, yet I cannot say exactly either life or death. The case is too critical a one; but I do not despair, Darby, if that will satisfy you."

"More power to you, Docthor, achora. Hell-an-age, where's that bottle? bring it here. Thank you, Vread. Docthor, here's wishin' you all happiness, an' may you set Mike on his legs wanst more! See, Docthor—see, man alive—look at this purty girl here, wid her wet cheeks; give her some hope, ahagur, if you can; keep the crathur's spirits up, an' I'll furnish you wid every yarrib in Europe, from the nettle to the rose."

"Don't despair, my good girl," said the Doctor, addressing Peggy. "I hope, I trust, that he may recover; but he must be kept easy and quiet."

"May the blessing of God, sir, light down on you for the same words," replied Peggy, in a voice tremulous, with gratitude and joy.

"Are you done wid him, Docthor?" said old Reillaghan.

"At present," replied the Doctor, "I can do nothing more for him; but I shall see him early to-morrow morning."

"Bekase, sir," continued the worthy man, "here's Darby More, who's afflicted with a comflamboration, or some sich thing, inwardly, an' if you should ase him, sir, I'd pay the damages, whatever they might be."

The Doctor smiled slightly. "Darby's complaint," said he, "is beyond my practice; there is but one cure for it, and that is, if I have any skill, a little of what's in the bottle here, taken, as our prescriptions sometimes say, 'when the patient is inclined for it.'"

"By my sou—sanctity, Docthor," said Darby, "you're a man of skill, any how, an' that's well known, sir. Nothin', as Father Hoolaghan says, but the sup of whiskey does this sarra of a configuration good. It rises the wind off o' my stomach, Docthor!"

“It does, Darby, it does. Now let all be peace and quietness,” continued the Doctor: “take away a great part of this fire, and don’t attempt to remove him to any other bed until I desire you. I shall call again tomorrow morning early.”

The Doctor’s attention to his patient was unremitting; everything that human skill, joined to long experience and natural talent, could do to restore the young man to his family was done; and in the course of a few weeks the friends of Keillaghan had the satisfaction of seeing him completely out of danger.

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Mike declared, after his recovery, that though incapable of motion on the mountains, he was not altogether insensible to what passed around him. The loud tones of their conversation he could hear. The oath which young M’Kenna uttered in a voice so wild and exalted, fell clearly on his ear, and he endeavored to contradict it, in order that he might be secured and punished in the event of his death. He also said; that the pain he suffered in the act of being conveyed home, occasioned him to groan feebly; but that the sobs, and cries, and loud conversation of those who surrounded him, prevented his moans from being heard. It is probable, after all, that were it not for the accidental fall of Owen upon his body, he might not have survived the wound, inasmuch as the medical skill, which contributed to restore him, would not have been called in.

Though old Frank M’Kenna and his family felt an oppressive load of misery taken off their hearts by the prospect of Reillaghan’s recovery, yet it was impossible for them to be insensible to the fate of their son, knowing as they did, that he must have been out among the mountains during the storm. His unhappy mother and Rody sat up the whole night, expecting his return, but morning arrived without bringing him home. For six days afterwards the search for him was general and strict; his friends and neighbors traversed the mountain wastes until they left scarcely an acre of them unexplored. On the sixth day there came a thaw, and towards the close of the seventh he was found a “stiffened corpse,” *upon the very spot where he had shot his rival*, and on which he had challenged the Almighty to stretch him in death, without priest or prayer, if he were guilty of the crime with which he had been charged. He was found lying with a, circle drawn round him, his head pillowed upon the innocent blood which he had shed with the intention of murder, and a bloody cross marked upon his breast and forehead. It was thought that in the dread of approaching death he had formed it with his hand, which came accidentally in contact with the blood that lay in clots about him.

[Illustration: PAGE 886— Upon the very spot where he had shot his rival]

The manner of his death excited a profound and wholesome feeling among the people, with respect to the crime which he attempted to commit. The circumstances attending it, and his oath upon the spot where he shot Reillaghan, are still spoken of by the fathers of the neighboring villages, and even by some who were present at the search for his body, it was also doubly remarkable on account of a case of spectral illusion which it produced, and which was ascribed to the effect of M’Kenna’s supernatural appearance at the time. The daughter of a herdsman in the mountains was strongly affected by the spectacle of his dead body borne past her father’s door. In about a fortnight afterwards she assured her family that he appeared to her. She saw the

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apparition, in the beginning, only at night; but ere long it ventured, as she imagined, to appear in day-light. Many imaginary conversations took place between them; and the fact of the peasantry flocking to the herd's house to satisfy themselves as to the truth of the rumor, is yet well remembered in the parish. It, was also affirmed, that as the funeral of M'Kenna passed to the churchyard, a hare crossed it, which some one present struck on the side with a stone. The hare, says the tradition, was not injured, but the sound of the stroke resembled that produced on striking an empty barrel.

We have nearly wound up our story, in which we have feebly endeavored to illustrate scenes that were, some time ago, not unusual in Irish life. There is little more to be added, except that Mike Reillaghan almost miraculously recovered; that he and Peggy Gartland were happily married, and that Darby More lost his character as a dreamer in that parish, Mike, with whom, however, he still continued a favorite, used frequently to allude to the speaking crucifix, the dream aforesaid, and his bit of fiction, in assuring his mother that he had dissuaded him against "tracing" on that eventful day.

"Well, avourneen," Darby would exclaim, "the holiest of us has our failins; but, in throth, the truth of it is, that myself didn't know what I was sayin', I was so *through other* (\* agitated); for I renumber that I was badly afflicted with this thief of a configuration inwardly at the time. That, you see, and your own troubles, put my mind ashanghran for 'a start. But, upon my sanctity,—an' sure that's a great oath wid me—only for the Holy Carol you bought from me the night before, an' above all touchin' you wid the blessed Cruciwhix, you'd never a' got over the same accident. Oh, you may smile an' shake your head, but it's thruth whether or not! Glory be to God!"

The priest of the parish, on ascertaining correctly the incidents mentioned in this sketch, determined to deprive the people of at least one pretext for their follies. He represented the abuses connected with such a ceremony to the bishop; and from that night to the present time, the inhabitants of Kilnaheery never had, in their own parish, an opportunity of hearing a Midnight Mass.

## THE DONAGH; OR, THE HORSE STEALERS.

Carnmore, one of those small villages that are to be found in the outskirts of many parishes in Ireland, whose distinct boundaries are lost in the contiguous mountain-wastes, was situated at the foot of a deep gorge or pass, overhung by two bleak hills, from the naked sides of which the storm swept over it, without discomposing the peaceful little nook of cabins that stood below. About a furlong farther down were two or three farm-houses, inhabited by a family named Cassidy, men of simple, inoffensive manners, and considerable wealth. They were, however, acute and wise in their generation; intelligent cattle-dealers, on whom it would have been a matter of some



difficulty to impose an unsound horse, or a cow older than was intimated by her horn-rings, even when conscientiously dressed up for sale by the ingenious aid of the file or burning-iron. Between their houses and the hamlet rose a conical pile of rocks, loosely leaped together, from which the place took its name of Carnmore.

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About three years before the time of this story, there came two men with their families to reside in the upper village, and the house which they chose as a residence was one at some distance from those which composed the little group we have just been describing. They said their name was Meehan, although the general report went, that this was not true; that the name was an assumed one, and that some dark mystery, which none could penetrate, shrouded their history and character. They were certainly remarkable men. The elder, named Anthony, was a dark, black-browed person, stern in his manner, and atrociously cruel in his disposition. His form was Herculean, his bones strong and hard as iron, and his sinews stood out in undeniable evidence of a life hitherto spent in severe toil and exertion, to bear which he appeared to an amazing degree capable. His brother Denis was a small man, less savage and daring in his character, and consequently more vacillating and cautious than Anthony; for the points in which he resembled him were superinduced upon his natural disposition by the close connection that subsisted between them, and by the identity of their former pursuits in life, which, beyond doubt, had been such as could not bear investigation.

The old proverb of "birds of a feather flock together," is certainly a true one, and in this case it was once more verified. Before the arrival of these men in the village, there had been two or three bad characters in the neighborhood, whose delinquencies were pretty well known. With these persons the strangers, by that sympathy which assimilates with congenial good or evil, soon became acquainted; and although their intimacy was as secret and cautious as possible, still it had been observed, and was known, for they had frequently been seen skulking together at daybreak, or in the dusk of evening.

It is unnecessary to say that Meehan and his brother did not mingle much in the society of Carnmore. In fact, the villagers and they mutually avoided each other. A mere return of the common phrases of salutation was generally the most that passed between them; they never entered into that familiarity which leads to mutual intercourse, and justifies one neighbor in freely entering the cabin of another, to spend a winter's night, or a summer's evening, in amusing conversation. Few had ever been in the house of the Meehans since it became theirs; nor were the means of their subsistence known. They led an idle life, had no scarcity of food, were decently clothed, and never wanted money; circumstances which occasioned no small degree of conjecture in Carnmore and its vicinity.



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Some said they lived by theft; others that they were coiners; and there were many who imagined, from the diabolical countenance of the older brother, that he had sold himself to the devil, who, they affirmed, set his mark upon him, and was his paymaster. Upon this hypothesis several were ready to prove that he had neither breath nor shadow; they had seen him, they said, standing under a hedge-row of elder—that unholy tree which furnished wood for the cross, and on which Judas hanged himself—yet, although it was noon-day in the month of July, his person threw out no shadow. Worthy souls! because the man stood in the shade at the time. But with these simple explanations Superstition had nothing to do, although we are bound in justice to the reverend old lady to affirm that she was kept exceedingly busy in Carnmore. If a man had a sick cow, she was elf-shot; if his child became consumptive, it had been overlooked, or received a blast from the fairies; if the whooping-cough was rife, all the afflicted children were put three times under an ass; or when they happened to have the “mumps,” were led, before sunrise to a south-running stream, with a halter hanging about their necks, under an obligation of silence during the ceremony. In short, there could not possibly be a more superstitious spot than that which these men of mystery had selected for their residence. Another circumstance which caused the people to look upon them with additional dread, was their neglect of mass on Sundays and holydays, though they avowed themselves Roman Catholics. They did not, it is true, join in the dances, drinking-matches, football, and other sports with which the Carnmore folk celebrated the Lord’s day; but they scrupled not, on the other hand, to mend their garden-ditch or mould a row of cabbages on the Sabbath—a circumstance, for which two or three of the Carnmore boys were, one Sunday evening when tipsy, well-nigh chastising them. Their usual manner, however, of spending that day was by sauntering lazily about the fields, or stretching themselves supinely on the sunny side of the hedges, their arms folded on their bosoms, and their hats lying over their faces to keep off the sun.

In the mean time, loss of property was becoming quite common in the neighborhood. Sheep were stolen from the farmers, and cows and horses from the more extensive graziers in the parish. The complaints against the authors of these depredations were loud and incessant: watches were set, combinations for mutual security formed, and subscriptions to a considerable amount entered into, with a hope of being able, by the temptation of a large reward, to work upon the weakness or cupidity of some accomplice to betray the gang of villains who infested the neighborhood. All, however, was in vain; every week brought some new act of plunder to light, perpetrated upon such unsuspecting persons as had hitherto escaped the notice of the robbers; but no trace could be discovered of

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the perpetrators. Although theft had from time to time been committed upon a small scale before the arrival of the Meehans in the village, yet it was undeniable that since that period the instances not only multiplied, but became of a more daring and extensive description. They arose in a gradual scale, from the henroost to the stable; and with such ability were they planned and executed, that the people, who in every instance identified Meehan and his brother with them, began to believe and hint that, in consequence of their compact with the devil, they had power to render themselves invisible. Common Fame, who can best treat such subjects, took up this, and never laid it aside until, by narrating several exploits which Meehan the elder was said to have performed in other parts of the kingdom, she wound it up by roundly informing the Carnmoriars, that, having been once taken prisoner for murder, he was caught by the leg, when half through a hedge, but that; being most wickedly determined to save his neck, he left the leg with the officer who took him, shouting out that it was a new species of leg-bail; and yet he moved away with surprising speed, upon two of as good legs as any man in his majesty's dominions might wish to walk off upon, from the insinuating advances of a bailiff or a constable!

The family of the Meehans consisted of their wives and three children, two boys and a girl; the former were the offspring of the younger brother, and the latter of Anthony. It has been observed, with truth and justice, that there is no man, how hardened and diabolical soever in his natural temper, who does not exhibit to some particular object a peculiar species of affection. Such a man was Anthony Meehan. That sullen hatred which he bore to human society, and that inherent depravity of heart which left the trail of vice and crime upon his footsteps, were flung off his character when he addressed his daughter Anne. To him her voice was like music; to her he was not the reckless villain, treacherous and cruel, which the helpless and unsuspecting found him; but a parent kind and indulgent as ever pressed an only and beloved daughter to his bosom. Anne was handsome: had she been born and educated in an elevated rank in society, she would have been softened by the polish and luxury of life into perfect beauty: she was, however, utterly without education. As Anne experienced from her father no unnatural cruelty, no harshness, nor even indifference, she consequently loved him in return; for she knew that tenderness from such a man was a proof of parental love rarely to be found in life. Perhaps she loved not her father the less on perceiving that he was proscribed by the world; a circumstance which might also have enhanced in his eyes the affection she bore him. When Meehan came to Carnmore, she was sixteen; and, as that was three years before the incident occurred on which we have founded this narrative, the reader may now suppose her to be about nineteen; an interesting country girl, as to person, but with a mind completely neglected, yet remarkable for an uncommon stock of good nature and credulity.

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About the hour of eleven o'clock, one winter's night in the beginning of December, Meehan and his brother sat moodily at their hearth. The fire was of peat which had recently been put down, and, from between the turf, the ruddy blaze was shooting out in those little tongues and, gusts of sober light, which throw around the rural hearth one of those charms which make up the felicity of domestic life. The night was stormy, and the wind moaned and howled along the dark hills beneath which the cottage stood. Every object in the house was shrouded in a mellow shade, which afforded to the eye no clear outline, except around the hearth alone, where the light brightened into a golden hue, giving the idea of calmness and peace. Anthony Meehan sat on one side of it, and his daughter opposite him, knitting: before the fire sat Denis, drawing shapes in the ashes for his own amusement.

"Bless me," said he, "how sthrange it is!"

"What is?" inquired Anthony, in his deep and grating tones.

"Why, thin, it is sthrange!" continued the other, who, despite of the severity of his brother, was remarkably superstitious—"a coffin I made in the ashes three times runnin'! Isn't it very quare, Anne?" he added, addressing the niece.

"Sthrange enough, of a sartinty," she replied, being unwilling to express before her father the alarm which the incident, slight as it was, created in her mind; for she, like her uncle, was subject to such ridiculous influences. "How did it happen, uncle?"

"Why, thin, no way in life, Anne; only, as I was thryin' to make a shoe, it turned out a coffin on my hands. I thin smoothed the ashes, and began agin, an' sorra bit of it but was a coffin still. Well, says I, I'll give you another chance,—here goes one more;—an', as sure as gun's iron, it was a coffin the third time. Heaven be about us, it's odd enough!"

"It would be little matther you were nailed down in a coffin," replied Anthony, fiercely; "the world would have little loss. What a pitiful cowardly rascal you are! Afraid o' your own shadow afther the 'sun goes down, except I'm at your elbow! Can't you dhrive all them palavers out o' your head? Didn't the sargint tell us, an' prove to us, the time we broke the guardhouse, an' took Frinch lave o' the ridgment for good, that the whole o' that, an' more along wid it, is all priestcraft?"

"I remimber he did, sure enough: I dunna where the same sargint is now, Tony? About no good, any way, I'll be bail. Howsomever, in regard o' that, why doesn't yourself give up fastin' from the mate of a Friday?"

"Do you want me to sthretch you on the hearth?" replied the savage, whilst his eyes kindled into fury, and his grim visage darkened into a satanic expression. "I'll tache you to be puttin' me through my catechiz about aitin' mate. I may manage that as I please; it

comes at first-cost, anyhow: but no cross-questions to me about it, if you regard your health!"

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"I must say for you," replied Denis, reproachfully, "that you're a good warrant to put the health astray upon us of an odd start: we're not come to this time o' day widout carryin' somethin' to remimber you by. For my own part, Tony, I don't like such tokens; an' moreover, I wish you had resaved a thrifle o' larnin', espishily in the writin' line; for whenever we have any difference, you're so ready to prove your opinion by settin' your mark upon me, that I'd rather, fifty times over, you could write it with pen an' ink."

"My father will give that up, uncle," said the niece; "it's bad for any body to be fightin', but worst of all for brothers, that ought to live in peace and kindness. Won't you, father?"

"Maybe I will, dear, some o' these days, on your account, Anne; but you must get this creature of an uncle of yours, to let me alone, an' not be aggravatin' me with his folly. As for your mother, she's worse; her tongue's sharp enough to skin a flint, and a batin' a day has little effect on her."

Anne sighed, for she knew how long an irreligious life, and the infamous society with which, as her father's wife, her mother was compelled to mingle, had degraded her.

"Well, but, father, you don't set her a good example yourself," said Anne; "and if she scoulds and drinks now, you know she was a different woman when you got her. You allow this yourself; and the crathur, the dhrunkest time she is, doesn't she cry bitterly, remimberin' what she has been. Instead of one batin' a day, father, thry no batin' a day, an' maybe it 'ill turn out betther than thump-in' an' smashin' her as you do."

"Why, thin, there's truth and sinse in what the girl says, Tony," observed Denis.

"Come," replied Anthony, "whatever she may say I'll suffer none of your interference. Go an' get us the black bottle from the place; it'll soon be time to move. I hope they won't stay too long."

Denis obeyed this command with great readiness, for whiskey in some degree blunted the fierce passions of his brother, and deadened his cruelty; or rather diverted it from minor objects to those which occurred in the lawless perpetration of his villany.

The bottle was got, and in the meantime the fire blazed up brightly; the storm without, however, did not abate, nor did Meehan and his brother wish that it should. As the elder of them took the glass from the hands of the other, an air of savage pleasure blazed in his eyes, on reflecting that the tempest of the night was favorable to the execution of the villanous deed on which they were bent.

"More power to you!" said Anthony, impiously personifying the storm; "sure that's one proof that God doesn't throuble his head about what we do, or we would not get such a murdherin' fine night as is in it any how. That's it! blow and tundher away, an' keep

yourself an' us, as black as hell, sooner than we should fail in what we intend! Anne, your health, acushla!—Yours, Dinny! If you keep your tongue off o' me, I'll neither make nor meddle in regard o' the batin' o' you."

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"I hope you'll stick to that, any how," replied Denis; "for my part I'm sick and sore o' you every day in the year. Many another man would put salt wather between himself and yourself, sooner nor become a battin'-stone for you, as I have been. Few would bear it, when they could mend themselves."

"What's that you say?" replied Anthony, suddenly laying down his glass, catching his brother by the collar, and looking him with a murderous scowl in the face. "Is it thrachery you hint at?—eh? Sarpent, is it thrachery you mane?" and as he spoke, he compressed Denis's neck between his powerful hands, until the other was black in the face.

Anne flew to her uncle's assistance, and with much difficulty succeeded in rescuing him from the deadly gripe of her father, who exclaimed, as he loosed his hold, "You may thank the girl, or you'd not spake, nor dare to spake, about crossin' the salt wather, or lavin' me in a desateful way agin. If I ever suspect that a thought of thrachery comes into your heart, I'll do for you; and you may carry your story to the world I'll send you to."

"Father, dear, why are you so suspicious of my uncle?" said Anne; "sure he's a long time livin' with you, an' goin' step for step in all the danger you meet with. If he had a mind to turn out a Judas agin you, he might a done it long agone; not to mintion the throuble it would bring on his own head seein' he's as deep in everything as you are."

"If that's all that's throublin' you," replied Denis, trembling, "you may make yourself asy on the head of it; but well I know 't isn't that that's on your mind; 'tis your own conscience; but sure it's not fair nor rasonable for you to vent your evil thoughts on me!"

"Well, he won't," said Anne, "he'll quit it; his mind's throubled; an', dear knows, it's no wondher it should. Och, I'd give the world wide that his conscience was lightened of the load that's upon it! My mother's lameness is nothin'; but the child, poor thing! An' it was only widin three days of her lyin'-in. Och, it was a cruel sthroke, father! An' when I seen its little innocent face, dead an' me widout a brother, I thought my heart would break, thinkin' upon who did it!" The tears fell in showers from her eyes, as she added, "Father, I don't want to vex you; but I wish you to feel sorrow for that at laste. Oh, if you'd bring the priest, an' give up sich coorses, father dear, how happy we'd be, an' how happy yourself 'ud be!"

Conscience for a moment started from her sleep, and uttered a cry of guilt in his spirit; his face became ghastly, and his eyes full of horror: his lips quivered, and he was about to upbraid his daughter with more harshness than usual, when a low whistle, resembling that of a curlew, was heard at a chink of the door. In a moment he gulped down another glass of spirits, and was on his feet: "Go, Denis, an' get the arms," said he to his brother, "while I let them in."

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On opening the door, three men entered, having their great coats muffled about them, and their hats slouched. One of them, named Kenny, was a short villain, but of a thick-set, hairy frame. The other was known as "the Big Mower," in consequence of his following that employment every season, and of his great skill in performing it. He had a deep-rooted objection against permitting the palm of his hand to be seen; a reluctance which common fame attributed to the fact of his having received on that part the impress of a hot iron, in the shape of the letter T, not forgetting to add, that T was the hieroglyphic for Thief. The villain himself affirmed it was simply the mark of a cross, burned into it by a blessed friar, as a charm against St. Vitus's dance, to which he had once been subject. The people, however, were rather sceptical, not of the friar's power to cure that malady, but of the fact of his ever having moved a limb under it; and they concluded with telling him, good-humoredly enough, that notwithstanding the charm, he was destined to die "wid the threble of it in his toe." The third was a noted pedlar called Martin, who, under pretence of selling tape, pins, scissors, *etc.*, was very useful in setting such premises as this virtuous fraternity might, without much risk, make a descent upon.

"I thought yez would out-stay your time," said the elder Meehan, relapsing into his determined hardihood of character; "we're ready, hours ago. Dick Rice gave me two curlew an' two patrich calls to-day. Now pass the glass among yez, while Denny brings the arms. I know there's danger in this business, in regard of the Cassidys livin' so near us. If I see anybody afut, I'll use the curlew call: an' if not, I'll whistle twice on the patrich (\* partridge) one, an' ye may come an. The horse is worth eighty guineas, if he's worth a shillin'; an' we'll make sixty off him ourselves."

For some time they chatted about the plan in contemplation, and drank freely of the spirits, until at length the impatience of the elder Meehan at the delay of his brother became ungovernable. His voice deepened into tones of savage passion, as he uttered a series of blasphemous curses against this unfortunate butt of his indignation and malignity. At length he rushed out furiously to know why he did not return; but, on reaching a secret excavation in the mound against which the house was built, he found, to his utter dismay, that Denis had made his escape by an artificial passage, scooped out of it to secure themselves a retreat in case of surprise or detection. It opened behind the house among a clump of black-thorn and brushwood, and was covered "with green turf in such a manner as to escape the notice of all who were not acquainted with the secret. Meehan's face on his return was worked up into an expression truly awful.

"We're sould!" said he; "but stop, I'll tache the thraithur what revenge is!"

In a moment he awoke his brother's two sons, and dragged them by the neck, one in each hand, to the hearth.



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"Your villain of a father's off," said he, "to betray us; go, an' folly him; bring him back, an' he'll be safe from me: but let him become a slag agin us, and if I should hunt you both into bowels of the airth, I'll send yez to a short account. I don't care that," and he snapped his fingers—"ha, ha—no, I don't care that for the law; I know how to dale with it, when it comes! An' what's the stuff about the other world, but priestcraft and lies!"

"Maybe," said the Big Mower, "Denis is gone to get the foreway of us, an' to take the horse himself. Our best plan is to lose no time, at all events; so let us hurry, for fraid the night might happen to clear up."

"He!" said Meehan, "he go alone! No; the miserable wretch is afeard of his own shadow. I only wondher he stuck to me so long: but sure he wouldn't, only I bate the courage in, and the fear out of him. You're right, Brian," said he upon reflection, "let us lose no time, but be off. Do ye mind?" he added to his nephews; "Did ye hear me? If you see him, let him come back, an' all will be berrid; but, if he doesn't, you know your fate!" Saying which, he and his accomplices departed amid the howling of the storm.

The next morning, Carnmore, and indeed the whole parish, was in an uproar; a horse, worth eighty guineas, had been stolen in the most daring manner from the Cassidys, and the hue-and-cry was up after the thief or thieves who took him. For several days the search was closely maintained, but without success; not the slightest trace could be found of him or them. The Cassidys could very well bear to lose him; but there were many struggling farmers, on whose property serious depredations had been committed, who could not sustain their loss so easily. It was natural under these circumstances that suspicion should attach to many persons, some of whom had but indifferent characters before as well as to several who certainly had never deserved suspicion. When a fortnight or so had elapsed, and no circumstances transpired that might lead to discovery, the neighbors, including those who had principally suffered by the robberies, determined to assemble upon a certain day at Cassidy's house, for the purpose of clearing themselves, on oath, of the imputation thrown out against some of them, as accomplices in the thefts. In order, however, that the ceremony should be performed as solemnly as possible, they determined to send for Father Farrell, and Mr. Nicholson, a magistrate, both of whom they requested to undertake the task of jointly presiding upon this occasion; and, that the circumstance should have every publicity, it was announced from the altar by the priest, on the preceding Sabbath, and published on the church-gate in large legible characters ingeniously printed with a pen by the village schoolmaster.

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In fact, the intended meeting, and the object of it, were already notorious; and much conversation was held upon its probable result, and the measures which might be taken against those who should refuse to swear. Of the latter, description there was but one opinion, which was that their refusal in such a case would be tantamount to guilt. The innocent were anxious to vindicate themselves from suspicion: and, as the suspected did not amount to more than a dozen, of course, the whole body of the people, including the thieves themselves, who applauded it as loudly as the other, all expressed their satisfaction at the measures about to be adopted. A day was therefore appointed, on which the inhabitants of the neighborhood, particularly the suspected persons, should come to assemble at Cassidy's house, in order to have the characters of the innocent cleared up, and the guilty, if possible, made known.

On the evening before this took place, were assembled in Meehan's cottage, the elder Meehan, and the rest of the gang, including Denis, who had absconded, on the night of the theft.

"Well, well, Denny," said Anthony, who forced his rugged nature into an appearance of better temper, that he might strengthen the timid spirit of his brother against the scrutiny about to take place on the morrow—perhaps, too, he dreaded him—"Well, well. Denny, I thought, sure enough, that it was some new piece of cowardice came over you. Just think of him," he added, "shabbin' off, only because he made, with a bit of a rod, three strokes in the ashes that he thought resembled a coffin!—ha, ha, ha!"

This produced a peal of derision at Denis's pusillanimous terror.

"Ay!" said the Big Mower, "he was makin' a coffin, was he? I wondher it wasn't a rope you drew, Denny. If any one dies in the coil, it will be the greatest coward, an' that's yourself."

"You may all laugh," replied Denis, "but I know such things to have a manin'. When my mother died, didn't my father, the heavens be his bed! see a black coach about a week before it? an' sure from the first day she tuck ill, the dead-watch was heard in the house every night: and what was more nor that, she kept warm until she went into her grave; \* an' accordingly, didn't my sisther Shibby die within a year afther?"

\* It is supposed in Ireland, when a corpse retains, for a longer space of time than usual, any thing like animal heat, that some person belonging to the family of the deceased will die within a year.

"It's no matther about thim things," replied Anthony; "it's thruth about the dead-watch, my mother keepin' warm, an' Shibby's death, any way, But on the night we tuck Cassidy's horse, I thought you were goin' to betray us: I was surely in a murdherin' passion, an' would have done harm, only things turned out as they did."



"Why," said Denis, "the truth is, I was afeard some of us would be shot, an' that the lot would fall on myself; for the coffin, thinks I, was sent as a warnin'. How-and-ever, I spied about Cassidy's stable, till I seen that the coast was clear; so whin I heard the low cry of the patrich that Anthony and I agreed on, I joined yez."

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"Well, about to-morrow," observed Kenny—"ha, ha, ha!—there'll be lots o' swearin'—Why the whole parish is to switch the primer; many a thumb and coat-cuff will be kissed in spite of priest or magistrate. I remimber once, when I was swearin' an alibi for long Paddy Murray, that suffered for the M'Gees, I kissed my thumb, I thought, so smoothly, that no one would notice it; but I had a keen one to dale with, so says he, 'You know for the matther o' that, my good fellow, that you have your thumb to kiss every day in the week,' says he, 'but you might salute the book out o' dacency and good manners; not,' says he, 'that you an' it are strangers aither; for, if I don't mistake, you're an ould hand at swearin' alibis.'

"At all evints, I had to smack the book itself, and it's I, and Barney Green, and Tim Casserly, that did swear stiffly for Paddy, but the thing was too clear agin him. So he suffered, poor fellow, an' died right game, for he said over his dhrop—ha, ha, ha!—that he was as innocent o' the murder as a child unborn: an' so he was in one sinse, bein' afther gettin' absolution."

"As to thumb-kissin'," observed the elder Meehan; "let there be none of it among us to-morrow; if we're caught at it 'twould be as bad as stayin' away altogether; for my part, I'll give it a smack like a pistol-shot—ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope they won't bring the priest's book," said Denis. "I haven't the laste objection agin payin' my respects to the magistrate's paper, but somehow I don't like tastin' the priest's in a falsity."

"Don't you know," said the Big Mower, "that with a magistrate's present, it's ever an' always only the Tistament by law that's used. I myself wouldn't kiss the mass-book in a falsity."

"There's none of us sayin' we'd do it in a lie," said the elder Meehan; "an' it's well for thousands that the law doesn't use the priest's book; though, after all, aren't there books that say religion's all a sham? I think myself it is; for if what they talk about justice an' Providence is thrue, would Tom Dillon be transported for the robbery we committed at Bantry? Tom, it's true, was an ould offender; but he was innocent of that, any way. The world's all chance; boys, as Sargint Eustace used to say, and whin we die there's no more about us; so that I don't see why a man mightn't as well switch the priest's book as any other, only that, somehow, a body can't shake the terror of it off o' them."

"I dunna, Anthony, but you and I ought to curse that sargint; only for him we mightn't be as we are, sore in our conscience, an' afeard of every fut we hear passin'," observed Denis.

"Spake for your own cowardly heart, man alive," replied Anthony; "for my part, I'm afeared o' nothin'. Put round the glass, and don't be nursin' it there all night. Sure we're not so bad as the rot among the sheep, nor the black leg among the bullocks, nor

the staggers among the horses, any how; an' yet they'd hang us up only for bein' fond of a bit o' mate—ha, ha, ha!"

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"Thru enough," said the Big Mower, philosophizing—"God made the beef and the mutton, and the grass to feed it; but it was man made the ditches: now we're only bringin' things back to the right way that Providence made them in, when ould times were in it, manin' before ditches war invinted—ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tis a good argument," observed Kenny, "only that judge and jury would be a little delicate in actin' up to it; an' the more's the pity. Howsomever, as Providence made the mutton, sure it's not harm for us to take what he sends."

"Ay; but," said Denis,

"God made man, an' man made money;  
God made bees, and bees made honey;  
God made Satan, an' Satan made sin;  
An' God made a hell to put Satan in.'

Let nobody say there's not a hell; isn't there it plain from Scripthur?"

"I wish you had the Scripthur tied about your neck!" replied Anthony. "How fond of it one o' the greatest thieves that ever missed the rope is! Why the fellow could plan a roguery with any man that ever danced the hangman's hornpipe, and yet he be's repatin' bits an' scraps of ould prayers, an' charms, an' stuff. Ay, indeed! Sure he has a varse out o' the Bible, that he thinks can prevent a man from bein' hung up any day!"

While Denny, the Big Mower, and the two Meehans were thus engaged in giving expression to their peculiar opinions, the Pedlar held a conversation of a different kind with Anne.

With the secrets of the family in his keeping, he commenced a rather penitent review of his own life, and expressed his intention of abandoning so dangerous a mode of accumulating wealth. He said that he thanked heaven he had already laid up sufficient for the wants of a reasonable man; that he understood farming and the management of sheep particularly well: that it was his intention to remove to a different part of the kingdom, and take a farm; and that nothing prevented him from having done this before, but the want of a helpmate to take care of his establishment: he added, that his present wife was of an intolerable temper, and a greater villain by fifty degrees than himself. He concluded by saying, that his conscience twitched him night and day for living with her, and that by abandoning her immediately, becoming truly religious, and taking Anne in her place, he hoped, he said, to atone in some measure for his former errors.

Anthony, however, having noticed the earnestness which marked the Pedlar's manner, suspected him of attempting to corrupt the principles of his daughter, having forgotten the influence which his own opinions were calculated to produce upon her heart.

“Martin,” said he, “’twould be as well you ped attention to what we’re sayin’ in regard o’ the thrial to-morrow, as to be palaverin’ talk into the girl’s ear that can’t be good comin’ from *your* lips. Quit it, I say, quit it! *Corp an duoiwol* (\* My body to Satan)!—I won’t allow such proceedins!”

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"Swear till you blister your lips, Anthony," replied Martin: "as for me, bein' no residenthur, I'm not bound to it; an' what's more, I'm not suspected. 'Tis settin' some other bit o' work for yez I'll be, while you're all clearin' yourselves from stealin' honest Cassidy's horse. I wish we had him safely disposed of in the mane time, an' the money for him an' the other beasts in our pockets."

Much more conversation of a similar kind passed between them upon various topics connected with their profligacy and crimes. At length they separated for the night, after having concerted their plan of action for the ensuing scrutiny.

The next morning, before the hour appointed arrived, the parish, particularly the neighborhood of Carnmore, was struck with deep consternation. Labor became suspended, mirth disappeared, and every face was marked with paleness, anxiety, and apprehension. If two men met, one shook his head mysteriously, and inquired from the other, "Did you hear the news?"

"Ay! ay! the Lord be about us all, I did! an' I pray God that it may lave the counthry as it came to it!"

"Oh, an' that it may, I humbly make supplication this day!"

If two women met, it was with similar mystery and fear. "Vread, (\* Margaret) do you know what's at the Cassidys'?"

"Whisht, ahagur, I do; but let what will happen, sure it's best for us to say nothin'."

"Say! the blessed Virgin forbid! I'd cut my hand off o' me, afore I'd spake a word about it; only that—"

"Whisht! woman—for mercy's sake—don't——"

And so they would separate, each crossing herself devoutly.

The meeting at Cassidy's was to take place that day at twelve o'clock; but, about two hours before the appointed time, Anne, who had been in some of the other houses, came into her father's, quite pale, breathless and trembling.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with clasped hands, whilst the tears fell fast from her eyes, "we'll be lost, ruined; did yez hear what's in the neighborhood wid the Cassidys?"

"Girl," said the father, with more severity than he had ever manifested to her before, "I never yet riz my hand to you, but *ma corp an duowol*, if you open your lips, I'll fell you where you stand. Do you want that cowardly uncle o' yours to be the manes o' hanging your father? Maybe that was one o' the lessons Martin gave you last night?" And as he spoke he knit his brows at her with that murderous scowl which was habitual to him.





The girl trembled, and began to think that since her father's temper deepened in domestic outrage and violence as his crimes multiplied, the sooner she left the family the better. Every day, indeed, diminished that species of instinctive affection which she had entertained towards him; and this, in proportion as her reason ripened into a capacity for comprehending the dark materials of which his character was composed. Whether he himself began to consider detection at hand, or not, we cannot say; but it is certain, that his conduct was marked with a callous recklessness of spirit, which increased in atrocity to such a degree, that even his daughter could, only not look on him with disgust.

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"What's the matter now?" inquired Denis, with alarm: "is it anything about us, Anthony?"

"No, 'tish't," replied the other, "anything about us! What 'ud it be about us for? 'Tis a lyin' report that some cunnin' knave spread, hopin' to find out the guilty. But hear me, Denis, once for all; we're goin' to clear ourselves—now listen—an' let my words sink deep into you heart: if you refuse to swear this day—no matter what's put into your hand—you'll do harm—that's all: have courage, man; but should you cow, your coorse will be short; an' mark, even if you escape me, your sons won't: I have it all planned: an' *corp an' duowol!* thim you won't know from Adam will revenge me, if I am taken up through your unmanliness."

"'Twould be betther for us to lave the counthry," said Anne; "we might slip away as it is."

"Ay," said the father, "an' be taken by the neck afore we'd get two miles from the place! no, no, girl; it's the safest way to brazen thim out. Did you hear me, Denis?"

Denis started, for he had been evidently pondering on the mysterious words of Anne, to which his brother's anxiety to conceal them gave additional mystery. The coffin, too, recurred to him; and he feared that the death shadowed out by it would in some manner or other occur in the family. He was, in fact, one of those miserable villains with but half a conscience;—that is to say, as much as makes them the slaves of the fear which results from crime, without being the slightest impediment to their committing it. It was no wonder he started at the deep pervading tones of his brother's voice, for the question was put with ferocious energy.

On starting, he looked with vague terror on his brother, fearing, but not comprehending, his question.

"What is it, Anthony?" he inquired. "Oh, for that matter," replied the other, "nothin' at all: think of what I said to you any how; swear through thick an' thin, if you have a regard for your own health, or for your childher. Maybe I had betther repate it again for you?" he continued, eyeing him with mingled fear and suspicion. "Dennis, as a friend, I bid you mind yourself this day, an' see you don't bring aither of us into throuble."

There lay before the Cassidys' houses a small flat of common, trodden into rings by the young horses they were in the habit of training. On this level space were assembled those who came, either to clear their own character from suspicion, or to witness the ceremony. The day was dark and lowering, and heavy clouds rolled slowly across the peaks of the surrounding mountains; scarcely a breath of air could be felt; and, as the country people silently approached, such was the closeness of the day, their haste to arrive in time, and their general anxiety, either for themselves or their friends, that almost every man, on reaching the spot, might be seen taking up the skirts of his "cothamore," or "big coat," (the peasant's handkerchief), to wipe the sweat from his

brow; and as he took off his dingy woollen hat, or caubeen, the perspiration rose in strong exhalations from his head.

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"Michael, am I in time?" might be heard from such persons, as they arrived: "did this business begin yit?"

"Full time, Larry; myself's here an hour ago but no appearance of anything as yit. Father Farrell and Squire Nicholson are both in Cassidys' waitin' till they're all gother, whin they'll begin to put thim through their facins. You hard about what they've got?"

"No; for I'm only on my way home from the berril of a *cleaveen* of mine, that we put down this mornin' in the Tullyard. What is it?"

"Why man alive, it's through the whole parish *inready*,"—he then went on, lowering his voice to a whisper, and speaking in a tone bordering on dismay.

The other crossed himself, and betrayed symptoms of awe and astonishment, not unmingled with fear.

"Well," he replied, "I dunna whether I'd come here, if I'd known that; for, innocent or guilty, I would'nt wish to be near it. Och, may God pity thim that's to come across it, I espishily if they dare to do it in a lie!"

"They needn't, I can tell yez both," observed a third person, "be a hair afeard of it, for the best rason livin', that there's no thruth at all in the report, nor the Cassidys never thought of sindin' for anything o' the kind: I have it from Larry Cassidy's own lips, an' he ought to know best." The truth is, that two reports were current among the crowd: one that the oath was to be simply on the Bible; and the other, that a more awful means of expurgation was resorted to by the Cassidys. The people, consequently, not knowing which to credit, felt that most painful of all sensations—uncertainty.

During the period which intervened between their assembling and the commencement of the ceremony, a spectator, interested in contemplating the workings of human nature in circumstances of deep interest, would have had ample scope for observation. The occasion was to them a solemn one. There was little conversation among them; for when a man is wound up to a pitch of great interest, he is seldom disposed to relish discourse. Every brow was anxious, every cheek blanched, and every, arm folded: they scarcely stirred, or when they did, only with slow abstracted movements, rather mechanical than voluntary. If an individual made his appearance about Cassidy's door, a sluggish stir among them was visible, and a low murmur of a peculiar character might be heard; but on perceiving that it was only some ordinary person, all subsided again into a brooding stillness that was equally singular and impressive.

Under this peculiar feeling was the multitude, when Meehan and his brother were seen approaching it from their own house. The elder, with folded arms, and hat pulled over his brows, stalked grimly forward, having that remarkable scowl upon his face, which had contributed to establish for him so diabolical a character. Denis walked by his side,

with his countenance strained to inflation;—a miserable parody of that sullen effrontery which marked the unshrinking miscreant beside him. He had not heard of the ordeal, owing to the caution of Anthony: but, notwithstanding his effort at indifference, a keen eye might have observed the latent anxiety of a man who was habitually villanous, and naturally timid.

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When this pair entered the crowd, a few secret glances, too rapid to be noticed by the people, passed between them and their accomplices. Denis, on seeing them present, took fresh courage, and looked with the heroism of a blusterer upon those who stood about him, especially whenever he found himself under the scrutinizing eye of his brother. Such was the horror and detestation in which they were held, that on advancing into the assembly, the persons on each side turned away, and openly avoided them: eyes full of fierce hatred were bent on them vindictively, and “curses, not loud, but deep,” were muttered with indignation which nothing but a divided state of feeling could repress within due limits. Every glance, however, was paid back by Anthony with interest, from eyes and black shaggy brows tremendously ferocious; and his curses, as they rolled up half smothered from his huge chest, were deeper and more diabolical by far than their own. He even jeered at them; but, however disgusting his frown, there was something truly appalling in the dark gleam of his scoff, which threw them at an immeasurable distance behind him, in the power of displaying on the countenance the worst of human passions.

At length Mr. Nicholson, Father Farrell, and his curate, attended by the Cassidys and their friends, issued from the house: two or three servants preceded them, bearing a table and chairs for the magistrate and priests, who, however, stood during the ceremony. When they entered one of the rings before alluded to, the table and chairs were placed in the centre of it, and Father Farrell, as possessing most influence over the people, addressed them very impressively.

“There are,” said he, in conclusion, “persons in this crowd whom we know to be guilty; but we will have an opportunity of now witnessing the lengths to which crime, long indulged in, can carry them. To such people I would say beware! for they know not the situation in which they are placed.”

During all this time there was not the slightest allusion made to the mysterious ordeal which had excited so much awe and apprehension among them—a circumstance which occasioned many a pale, downcast face to clear up, and resume its usual cheerful expression. The crowd now were assembled round the ring, and every man on whom an imputation had been fastened came forward, when called upon, to the table at which the priests and magistrate stood uncovered. The form of the oath was framed by the two clergymen, who, as they knew the reservations and evasions commonest among such characters, had ingeniously contrived not to leave a single loophole through which the consciences of those who belonged to this worthy fraternity might escape.

To those acquainted with Irish courts of justice there was nothing particularly remarkable in the swearing. Indeed, one who stood among the crowd might hear from those who were stationed at the greatest distance from the table, such questions as the following:

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"Is the thing in it, Art?"

"No; 'tis nothin' but the law Bible, the magistrate's own one."

To this the querist would reply, with a satisfied nod of the head, "Oh is that all? I heard they war to have it;" on which he would push himself through the crowd until he reached the table, where he took his oath as readily as another.

"Jem Hartigan," said the magistrate to one of those persons, "are you to swear?"

"Faix, myself doesn't know, your honor; only that I hard them say that the Cassidys mintioned our names along wid many other honest people; an' one wouldn't, in that case, lie under a false report, your honor, from any one, when we're as clear as them that never saw the light of anything of the kind."

The magistrate then put the book into his hand, and Jem, in return, fixed his eye, with much apparent innocence, on his face: "Now, Jem Hartigan," etc, etc., and the oath was accordingly administered. Jem put the book to his mouth, with his thumb raised to an acute angle on the back of it; nor was the smack by any means a silent one which he gave it (his thumb).

The magistrate set his ear with the air of a man who had experience in discriminating such sounds. "Hartigan," said he, "you'll condescend to kiss the book, sir, if you please: there's a hollowness in that smack, my good fellow, that can't escape me."

"Not kiss it, your honor? why, by this staff in my hand, if ever a man kissed"—

"Silence! you impostor," said the curate; "I watched you closely, and am confident your lips never touched the book."

"My lips never touched the book!—Why, you know I'd be sarry to conthradict either o' yez; but I was jist goin' to obsarve, wid simmission, that my own lips ought to know best; an' don't you hear them tellin' you that they did kiss it?" and he grinned with confidence in their faces.

"You double-dealing reprobate!" said the parish priest, "I'll lay my whip across your jaws. I saw you, too, an' you did not kiss the book."

"By dad, an' maybe I did not, sure enough," he replied: "any man may make a mistake unknownst to himself; but I'd give my oath, an' be the five crasses, I kissed it as sure as —however, a good thing's never the worse o' bein' twice done, gintlemen; so here goes, jist to satisfy yez;" and, placing the book near, his mouth, and altering his position a little, he appeared to comply, though, on the contrary, he touched neither it nor his thumb. "It's the same thing to me," he continued, laying down the book with an air of

confident assurance; "it's the same thing to me if I kissed it fifty times over, which I'm ready to do if that doesn't satisfy yez."

As every man acquitted himself of the charges brought against him, the curate immediately took down his name. Indeed, before the clearing commenced, he requested that such as were to swear would stand together within the ring, that, after having sworn, he might hand each of them a certificate of the fact, which they appeared to think might be serviceable to them, should they happen to be subsequently indicted for the same crime in a court of justice. This, however, was only a plan to keep them together for what was soon to take place.



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The detections of thumb kissing were received by those who had already sworn, and by several in the outward crowd, with much mirth. It is but justice, however, to the majority of those assembled to state, that they appeared to entertain a serious opinion of the nature of the ceremony, and no small degree of abhorrence against those who seemed to trifle with the solemnity of an oath.

Standing on the edge of the circle, in the innermost row, were Meehan and his brother. The former eyed, with all the hardness of a stoic, the successive individuals as they passed up to the table. His accomplices had gone forward, and to the surprise of many who strongly suspected them in the most indifferent manner “cleared” themselves in the trying words of the oath, of all knowledge of, and participation in, the thefts that had taken place.

The grim visage of the elder Meehan was marked by a dark smile, scarcely perceptible; but his brother, whose nerves were not so firm, appeared somewhat confused and distracted by the imperturbable villany of the perjurers.

At length they were called up. Anthony advanced slowly but collectedly, to the table, only turning his eye slightly about, to observe if his brother accompanied him. “Denis,” said he, “which of us will swear first? you may;” for, as he doubted his brother’s firmness, he was prudent enough, should he fail, to guard against having the sin of perjury to answer for, along with those demands which his country had to make for his other crimes. Denis took the book, and cast a slight glance at his brother as if for encouragement; their eyes met, and the darkened brow of Anthony hinted at the danger of flinching in this crisis. The tremor of his hand was not, perhaps, visible to any but Anthony, who, however, did not overlook this circumstance. He held the book, but raised not his eye to meet the looks of either the magistrate or the priests; the color also left his face, as with shrinking lips he touched the Word of God in deliberate falsehood. Having then laid it down, Anthony received it with a firm grasp, and whilst his eye turned boldly in contemptuous mockery upon those who presented it, he impressed it with the kiss of a man whose depraved conscience seemed to goad him only to evil. After “clearing” himself, he laid the Bible upon the table with the affected air of a person who felt hurt at the imputation of theft, and joined the rest with a frown upon his countenance, and a smothered curse upon his lips.

Just at this moment, a person from Cassidy’s house laid upon the table a small box covered with black cloth; and our readers will be surprised to hear, that if fire had come down visibly from heaven, greater awe and fear could not have been struck into their hearts, or depicted upon their countenances. The casual conversation, and the commentaries upon the ceremony they had witnessed, instantly settled into a most profound silence, and every eye was turned towards it with an interest absolutely fearful. “Let,” said the curate, “none of those who have sworn depart from within the ring, until they once more clear themselves upon this;” and as he spoke, he held it up—“Behold,” said he, “and tremble—behold THE DONAGH!!!”

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A low murmur of awe and astonishment burst from the people in general, whilst those within the ring, who with few exceptions, were the worst characters in the parish, appeared ready to sink into the earth. Their countenances, for the most part, paled into the condemned hue of guilt; many of them became almost unable to stand; and altogether, the state of trepidation and terror in which they stood, was strikingly wild and extraordinary.

The curate proceeded: "Let him now who is guilty depart; or if he wishes, advance and challenge the awful penalty annexed to perjury upon this! Who has ever been known to swear falsely upon the Donagh, without being visited by a tremendous punishment, either on the spot, or in twenty-four hours after his perjury? If we ourselves have not seen such instances with our own eyes, it is because none liveth who dare incur such dreadful penalty; but we have heard of those who did, and of their awful punishment afterwards. Sudden death, madness, paralysis, self-destruction, or the murder of some one dear to them, are the marks by which perjury upon the Donagh is known and visited. Advance, now, ye who are innocent, but let the guilty withdraw; for we do not desire to witness the terrible vengeance which would attend a false oath upon the Donagh. Pause, therefore, and be cautious! for if this grievous sin be committed, a heavy punishment will fall, not only upon you, but upon the parish in which it occurs!"

The words of the priest sounded to the guilty like the death-sentence of a judge. Before he had concluded, all, except Meehan and his brother, and a few who were really innocent, had slunk back out of the circle into the crowd. Denis, however, became pale as a corpse; and from time to time wiped the large drops from his haggard brow: even Anthony's cheek, despite of his natural callousness, was less red; his eyes became disturbed; but by their influence, he contrived to keep Denis in sufficient dread, to prevent him from mingling, like the rest, among the people. The few who remained along with them advanced; and notwithstanding their innocence, when the Donagh was presented and the figure of Christ and the Twelve Apostles displayed in the solemn tracery of its carving, they exhibited symptoms of fear. With trembling hands they touched the Donagh, and with trembling lips kissed the crucifix, in attestation of their guiltlessness of the charge with which they had been accused.

"Anthony and Denis Meehan, come forward," said the curate, "and declare your innocence of the crimes with which you are charged by the Cassidys and others."

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Anthony advanced; but Denis stood rooted to the ground; on perceiving which, the former sternly returned a step or two, and catching him by the arm with an admonitory grip, that could not easily be misunderstood, compelled him to proceed with himself step by step to the table. Denis, however, could feel the strong man tremble and perceive that although he strove to lash himself into the energy of despair, and the utter disbelief of all religious sanction, yet the trial before him called every slumbering prejudice and apprehension of his mind into active power. This was a death-blow to his own resolution, or, rather it confirmed him in his previous determination not to swear on the Donagh, except to acknowledge his guilt, which he could scarcely prevent himself from doing, such was the vacillating state of mind to which he felt himself reduced.

When Anthony reached the table, his huge form seemed to dilate by his effort at maintaining the firmness necessary to support him in this awful struggle between conscience and superstition on the one hand, and guilt, habit, and infidelity on the other. He fixed his deep, dilated eyes upon the Donagh, in a manner that betokened somewhat of irresolution: his countenance fell; his color came and went, but eventually settled in a flushed red; his powerful hands and arms trembled so much, that he folded them to prevent his agitation from being noticed; the grimness of his face ceased to be stern, while it retained the blank expression of guilt; his temples swelled out with the terrible play of their blood-vessels, his chest, too, heaved up and down with the united pressure of guilt, and the tempest which shook him within. At length he saw Denis's eye upon him, and his passions took a new direction; he knit his brows at him with more than usual fierceness, ground his teeth, and with a step and action of suppressed fury, he placed his foot at the edge of the table, and bowing down under the eye of God and man, took the awful oath on the mysterious Douagh, in a falsehood! When it was finished, a feeble groan broke from his brother's lips. Anthony bent his eye on him with a deadly glare; but Denis saw it not. The shock was beyond his courage,—he had become insensible.

Those who stood at the outskirts of the crowd, seeing Denis apparently lifeless, thought he must have sworn falsely on the Donagh, and exclaimed, "He's dead! gracious God! Denis Meehan's struck dead by the Donagh! He swore in a lie, and is now a corpse!" Anthony paused, and calmly surveyed him as he lay with his head resting upon the hands of those who supported him. At this moment a silent breeze came over where they stood; and, as the Donagh lay upon the table, the black ribbons with which it was ornamented fluttered with a melancholy appearance, that deepened the sensations of the people into something peculiarly solemn and preternatural. Denis at length revived, and stared wildly and vacantly about him. When composed sufficiently to distinguish and recognize individual objects, he looked upon the gloomy visage and threatening eye of his brother, and shrunk back with a terror almost epileptical. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "save me! save me from that man, and I'll discover all!"

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Anthony calmly folded one arm into his bosom, and his lip, quivered with the united influence of hatred and despair.

“Hould him,” shrieked a voice, which proceeded from his daughter, “hould my father or he’ll murdher him! Oh! oh! merciful Heaven!”

Ere the words were uttered she had made an attempt to clasp the arms of her parent, whose motions she understood; but only in time to receive from the pistol which he had concealed in his breast, the bullet aimed at her uncle! She tottered! and the blood spouted out of her neck upon her father’s brows, who hastily put up his hand and wiped it away, for it had actually blinded him.

The elder Meehan was a tall man, and as he stood, elevated nearly a head above the crowd, his grim brows red with his daughter’s blood—which, in attempting to wipe away, he had deeply streaked across his face—his eyes shooting fiery gleams of his late resentment, mingled with the wildness of unexpected horror—as he thus stood, it would be impossible to contemplate a more revolting picture of that state to which the principles that had regulated his life must ultimately lead, even in this world.

On perceiving what he had done, the deep working of his powerful frame was struck into sudden stillness, and he turned his eyes on his bleeding daughter, with a fearful perception of her situation. Now was the harvest of his creed and crimes reaped in blood; and he felt that the stroke which had fallen upon him was one of those by which God will sometimes bare his arm and vindicate his justice. The reflection, however, shook him not: the reality of his misery was too intense and pervading, and grappled too strongly with his hardened and unbending spirit, to waste its power upon a nerve or a muscle. It was abstracted, and beyond the reach of bodily suffering. From the moment his daughter fell, he moved not: his lips were half open with the conviction produced by the blasting truth of her death, effected prematurely by his own hand.

Those parts of his face which had not been stained with her blood assumed an ashy paleness, and rendered his countenance more terrific by the contrast. Tall, powerful, and motionless, he appeared to the crowd, glaring at the girl like a tiger anxious to join his offspring, yet stunned with the shock of the bullet which has touched a vital part. His iron-gray hair, as it fell in thick masses about his neck, was moved slightly by the blast, and a lock which fell over his temple was blown back with a motion rendered more distinct by his statue-like attitude, immovable as death.

A silent and awful gathering of the people around this impressive scene, intimated their knowledge of what they considered to be a judicial punishment annexed to perjury upon the Donagh. This relic lay on the table, and the eyes of those stood within view of it, turned from Anthony’s countenance to it, and again back to his blood-stained visage, with all the overwhelming influence of superstitious fear. Shudderings, tremblings, crossings, and ejaculations marked their conduct and feeling; for though the incident in

itself was simply a fatal and uncommon one, yet they considered it supernatural and miraculous.

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[Illustration: PAGE 899— Have I murdered my daughter?]

At length a loud and agonizing cry burst from the lips of Meehan—"Oh, God!—God of heaven an' earth!—have I murdered my daughter?" and he cast down the fatal weapon with a force which buried it some inches into the wet clay.

The crowd had closed upon Anne; but with the strength of a giant he flung them aside, caught the girl in his arms, and pressed her bleeding to his bosom. He gasped for breath: "Anne," said he, "Anne, I am without hope, an' there's none to forgive me except you;—none at all: from God, to the poorest of his creatures, I am hated an' cursed, by all, except you! Don't curse me, Anne; don't curse me! Oh, isn't it enough, darlin', that my sowl is now stained with your blood, along with my other crimes? In hell, on earth, an' in heaven, there's none to forgive your father but yourself!—none! none! Oh, what's comin' over me! I'm dizzy an' shiverin'! How cowl'd the day's got of a sudden! Hould up, avourneen machree! I was a bad man; but to you Anne, I was not as I was to every one! Darlin', oh look at me with forgiveness in your eye, or any way don't curse me! Oh! I'm far cowl'der now! Tell me that you forgive me, *acushla oge machree!*—*Manim asthee ha*, darlin', say it. I darn't look to God! but oh! do you say the forgivin' word to your father before you die!"

"Father," said she, "I deserve this—it's only just: I have plotted with that divilish Martin to betray them all, except yourself, an' to get the reward; an' then we intended to go— an'—live at a distance—an' in wickedness—where we—might not be known—he's at our house—let him be—secured. Forgive me, father; you said so often that there was no thruth in religion—that I began to—think so. Oh!—God! have mercy upon me!" And with these words she expired.

Meehan's countenance, on hearing this, was overspread with a ghastly look of the most desolating agony: he staggered back, and the body of his daughter, which he strove to hold, would have fallen from his arms, had it not been caught by the bystanders. His eye sought out his brother, but not in resentment. "Oh! she died, but didn't say 'I forgive you!' Denis," said he, "Denis, bring me home—I'm sick—very sick—oh, but it's eowld— everything's reeling—how cowl'd—cowl'd it is!"—and as he uttered the last words, he shuddered, fell down in a fit of apoplexy, never to rise again; and the bodies of his daughter and himself were both waked and buried together.

The result is brief. The rest of the gang were secured: Denis became approver, by whose evidence they suffered that punishment decreed by law to the crimes of which they had been guilty. The two events which I we have just related, of course added to the supernatural fear and reverence previously entertained for this terrible relic. It is still used as an ordeal of expurgation, in cases of stolen property; and we are not wrong in asserting, that many of those misguided creatures, who too frequently hesitate not to swear falsely on the Word of God, would suffer death itself sooner than commit a perjury on the Donagh.

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\* \* \* \* \*

The story of the Donagh, the Author has reason to believe, was the means of first bringing this curious piece of antiquity into notice. There is little to be added here to what is in the sketch, concerning its influence over the people, and the use of it as a blessed relic sought for by those who wished to apply a certain test of guilt or innocence to such well known thieves as scrupled not to perjure themselves on the Bible. For this purpose it was a perfect conscience-trap, the most hardened miscreant never having been known to risk a false oath upon it. Many singular anecdotes are related concerning it.

The Author feels great pleasure in subjoining two very interesting letters upon the subject—one from an accomplished scholar, the late Rev. Dr. O'Beirne, master of the! distinguished school of Portora at Enniskillen; the other from Sir William Betham, one of the soundest and most learned of our Irish Antiquaries. Both gentlemen differ in their opinion respecting the antiquity of the Donagh; and, as the author is incompetent to decide between them, he gives their respective letters to the public.

""Portora, August 15, 1832.

""My Dear Carleton.—It is well you wrote to me about the Dona. Your letter, which reached me this day, has proved that I was mistaken in supposing that the promised drawing was no longer necessary. I had imagined, that as you must have seen the Dona with Mr. Smith, any communication from me on the subject must be superfluous. And now that I have taken up my pen in compliance with your wish, what can I tell you that you have not perhaps conveyed to yourself by ocular inspection, and better than I can detail it?

""I accompanied Mr. S. to Brookborough, and asked very particularly of the old woman, late the possessor of the Dona, what she knew of its history; but she could say nothing about it, only that it had belonged to 'The Lord of Enniskillen.' This was the Fermanagh Maguire, who took an active part in the shocking rebellion of 1641, and was subsequently executed. His castle, the ruins of which are on the grounds of Portora, was stormed during the wars of that miserable time. When I entered on my inquiries for you, I anticipated much in the way of tradition, which, I hoped, might prove amusing at least; but disappointment met me on every hand. The old woman could not even detail distinctly how the Dona had come into her possession: it was brought into her family, she said, by a priest. The country people had imagined wonders relative to the contents of the box. The chief treasure it was supposed to contain was a lock of the Virgin Mary's hair!!!

""After much inquiry, I received the following vague detail from a person in this country; and let me remark, by the by, that though the possession of the Dona was matter of

boast to the Maguires, yet I could not gain the slightest information respecting it from even the most intelligent of the name. But now for the detail:—



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“Donagh O’Hanlon, an inhabitant of the upper part of this country (Fermanagh), went, about 600 years ago (longer than which time, in the opinion of a celebrated antiquary, the kind of engraving on it could not have been made), on a pious pilgrimage to Rome. His Holiness of the Vatican, whose name has escaped the recollection of the person who gave this information, as a reward for this supererogatory journey, presented him with the Dona. As soon as Donagh returned, the Dona was placed in the monastery of Aughadurcher (now Aughalurcher). But at the time, when Cromwell was in this country, the monastery was destroyed, and this *Ark of the Covenant* hid by some of the faithful at a small lake, named Lough Eye, between Lisbellaw and Tempo. It was removed thence when peace was restored, and again placed in some one of the neighboring chapels, when, as before in Aughalurcher, the oaths were administered with all the superstition that a depraved imagination could, invent, as “that their thighs might rot off,” “that they might go mad,” etc., etc.

“When Kings James and William made their appearance, it was again concealed in Largy, an old Castle at Sir H. Brooke’s deer-park. Father Antony Maguire, a priest of the Roman Church, dug it up from under the stairs in this old castle, after the battle of the Boyne, deposited it in a chapel, and it was used as before.

“After Father Antony’s death it fell into the possession of his niece, who took it over to the neighborhood of Florence-court. But the Maguires were not satisfied that a thing so sacred should depart from the family, and at their request it was brought back.”

“For the confirmation of the former part of this account, the informant refers you to Sir James Ware. I have not Ware’s book, and cannot therefore tell you how much of this story, is given by him, or whether any. In my opinion there is nothing detailed by him at all bearing on the subject. The latter part of this story rests, we are told, on tradition.

“As I confess myself not at all versed in Irish antiquities, it may appear somewhat presumptuous in me to venture an opinion respecting this box and its contents, which is, I understand, opposed to that of our spirited and intelligent antiquary, Sir Wm. Betham. I cannot persuade myself that either the box or the contained MSS. were of such an age as he claims for them. And, first, of the box:—

“At present the MSS. are contained in a wooden box; the wood is, I believe, yew. It cannot be pronounced, I think, with any certainty, whether the wooden box was originally part of the shrine of the precious MSS. It is very rude in its construction, and has not a top or lid. Indeed it appears to me to have been a coarse botched-up thing to receive the MSS. after the original box, which was made of brass, had fallen to pieces.

“The next thing that presents itself to us is the remnant of a brass box, washed with Silver, and rudely ornamented with tracery. The two ends and the front are all that remain of the brass box.

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"You may then notice what was evidently an addition of later times, the highly ornamented gilt-silver work, made fast on the remains of the brass box, and the chased compartments, which seem to have formed the top or lid of the box. But, as you have seen the whole, I need not perhaps have troubled you with this description. I shall only direct your attention to the two inscriptions. In the chasing you will see that they are referred to their *supposed* places.

"The upper inscription, when deciphered, is—

"'Johannes: O'Karbri: Comorbanus: S. Tignacii: Pmisit.' For S. Tignacii I would conjecture St. Ignacii: P, I should conjecture to be Presbyterus. On this I. should be very glad to have Sir William's opinion. I cannot imagine, if P stands part of a compound with misit, what it can mean. I would read and translate it thus—'John O'Carbery, coadjutor, priest, of the order of St. Ignatius, sent it.'

"This inscription, is on a narrow slip of silver, and is presumed to have formed part of the under edge of the upper part of the back of the box. The lower inscription is—;

"'*Johannes O'Barrdan fabricavit.*'

"This also is on a slip of silver, and appears to have fitted into a space on the upper surface which is supposed to have been the top, and to have lain in between the two square compartments on the left hand: this is marked in the drawing. I have expressed myself here in the language of doubt, for the box is all in confusion.

"Now, on the inscriptions, I would say, that they indicate to me a date much later than some gentlemen who have seen the box are willing to ascribe to it. In the island of Devenish, in our lake (Lough Erne), is an inscription, that was discovered in the ruins (still standing) of a priory, that was built there A. D. 1449. The characters in this inscription are much more remote from the Roman character in use among us than those used in the inscriptions on the box. The letters on the box bespeak a later period, when English cultivation had begun to produce some effect in our island, and the Roman character was winning its way into general use. I shall probably be able to let you see the Devenish inscription, and ajuxta position of it and the others will satisfy you, I think, on this point. In my opinion, then, the box, with all its ornaments, must have been made at some time since the year 1449. I cannot think it reasonable to suppose that an inscription, containing many letters like the Roman characters, should be more ancient than one not only having fewer letters resembling them, but also having the letters that differ differing essentially."

Now for the MSS.

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"I am deficient in antiquarian lore: this I have already confessed; but perhaps I want also the creative fancy and devoted faith of the genuine antiquary. I cannot, for example, persuade myself, that a MS. written in a clear, uniform, small character of the Roman form, could have been written in remote times, when there is reason to think that MSS. were written in uncial characters only, without stops, and with few or no divisions into words, sentences, or paragraphs. The palimpsest MS. examined by Dr. Barrett is in uncial characters, and is referred by him to the 6th or 7th century. *Cic. de Republica*, published by Angelo Mai, is assigned to much the same period. Small letters, and the distinctions above mentioned, were the invention of later times. I cannot therefore persuade myself that this MS. is of so early an age as some would ascribe to it, though I will not take it upon me to assign the precise time in which, it was written. The characters are decidedly and distinctly those now called the Roman: they have not many abbreviations, as far as I could judge, and they are written with much clearness and regularity. They are not the *literae cursivae*, or those used in writing for the sake of facility and connection: they seem rather formed more in imitation, of printed letters. SECUNDUM—This imperfect attempt to present one of the words, will explain my meaning. But I had better not weary you any more with my crude notions. I shall be very glad to hear your opinion, or that of Sir William Betham, to whom I should bow with all the respect due to talent and worth. I must avow my distrust of Irish antiquities; yet, allow me to add, that there is no man more willing to be converted from my heresy, if you would call it so, than

"My dear Carleton,

"Your friend and servant,

"A. O'BEIRNE."

"Stradbrook House, October, 1832.

"Dear Sir,—I have read Dr. O'Beirne's important letter on the Dona: the account he has collected of its recent history is full of interest, and for the most part, I have no doubt correct. His speculations respecting its antiquity I cannot give my adhesion to, not feeling a doubt myself on the subject. When I have time to investigate it more fully, I am satisfied that this box, like the others, of which accounts have already been published, will be found mentioned in the Irish Annals. The inscriptions, however, fully identify the MS. and the box, and show that antiquaries, from the execution of the workmanship and figures on these interesting reliques, often underrate their antiquity—a fault which the world are little inclined to give them credit for, and which they fall into from an anxiety to err on what they consider the side which is least likely to produce the smile of contempt or the sneer of incredulity, forgetting that it is the sole business of an antiquarian and historian to speak the truth, disregarding even contempt for so doing.

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"I had been somewhat lengthy in my description of the Dona, and from habit, entered into a minute account of all its parts, quite forgetting that you, perhaps, do not possess an appetite for antiquarian detail, and therefore might be better pleased to have a general outline than such a recital. I therefore proceed to give it as briefly as possible, not, however, omitting any material points.

"The Irish word Domnach, which is pronounced Dona, means the Lord's day, or the first day in the week, sanctified or consecrated to the service of the Lord. It is also in that sense used for a house, church, or chapel. Donayhmore means the great church or chapel dedicated to God. This box, being holy, as containing the Gospels, and having the crucifix thereon, was dedicated or consecrated to the service of God. Like the Caah, the Meeshach, and Dhimma's box, it is of brass, covered with plates of silver, and resembles the two former in having a box of yew inside, which was the original case of the MS. and became venerated so much, on that account, as to be deemed worthy of being inclosed with it in the shrine made by permission of John O'Carberry, Abbot of Clonmacnois, in the 14th century.

"The top of the Dona is divided by a cross, on the lower arm of which is a figure of the Savior; over his head is a shield, divided *per pale*, between two crystal settings; on the dexter is a hand holding a scourge or whip of three thongs, and on a chief a ring; on the sinister, on a chief the same charge and three crucifixion nails. In the first compartment, or quarter of the cross, are representations of St. Columbkil, St. Bridget, and St. Patrick. In the second, a bishop pierced with two arrows, and two figures of St. Peter and St. Paul. In the third, the Archangel Michael treading on the dragon, and the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus. In the fourth, St. Tigemach handing to his successor, St. Sinellus, the Dona; and a female figure, perhaps Mary Magdalen.

"The front of the Dona is ornamented with three crystal settings, surmounted by grotesque figures of animals. Between these are four horsemen with swords drawn, in full speed.

"The right hand end has a figure of St. Tigemach, and St. John the Baptist. The left hand end a figure of St. Catherine with her wheel.

"The Dona is nine inches and a half long, seven wide, and not quite four thick.

"So far I have been enabled to describe the Dona from the evidently accurate and well executed drawings you were so good as to present to me. Why the description is less particular than it should have been, I shall take another opportunity of explaining to you.

"There are three inscriptions on the Dona: one on a scroll from the hand of the figure of the Baptist, of ECCE AGNUS DEI. The two others are on plates of silver, but their exact position on the box is not marked in the drawing, but may be guessed by certain places which the plates exactly fit. "The first is—

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“JOHANNES: OBARRDAN: FABRICAVIT.

“The second—

“JOHS: OKARBRI: COMORBANVS: S. TIGNACH: PMISIT.”

*“John O’Barrdan made this box by the permission of John O’Carbry, successor of St. Tigernach.”*

“St. Tierny, or St. Tigernach was third Bishop of Clogher, having succeeded St. Maccartin in the year 506. In the list of bishops, St. Patrick is reckoned the first, and founder of the see. Tigernach died the 4th of April, 548.

“John O’Carbry was abbot of Clones, or Clounish, in the County of Monaghan, and as such was *comorb*, or *corb*\*—i. e., successor—of Tigernach, who was founder of the abbey and removed the episcopal seat from Clogher to Clounish. Many of the abbots Were also bishops of the see. He died in 1353. How long he was abbot does not appear; but the age of the outside covering of the Dona is fixed to the 14th century.

\* All the successors of the founder saints were called by the Irish *comorbs* or *corbs*. The reader Will perceive that O’Carbry was a distant but not we immediate successor of St. Tigernach.

“Since the foregoing was written I have seen the Dona, which was exhibited at the last meeting of the Royal Irish Academy. it has been put together at a guess, but different from the drawing. There is inside O’Barrdan’s case another of silver plates some centuries older, and inside that the yew box, which originally contained the manuscripts, now so united by damp as to be apparently inseparable, and nearly illegible; for they have lost the color of vellum, and are quite black, and very much decayed. The old Irish version of the New Testament is well worthy of being edited; it is, I conceive, the oldest Latin version extant, and varies much from the Vulgate or Jerome’s.

“The MS. inclosed in the yew box appears from the two membranes handed me by your friend Mr. -----, to be a copy of the Gospels--at least those membranes were part of the two first membranes of the Gospel of St. Matthew, and, I would say, written in the 5th or 6th century; were, probably, the property of St. Tigernach himself, and passed most likely to the abbots of Clounish, his successors, as an heirloom, until it fell into the hands of the Maguires, the most powerful of the princes of the country now comprising the diocese of Clogher. Dr. O’Beirne’s letter I trust you will publish. I feel much indebted to the gentleman for his courteous expressions towards me, and shall be most happy to have the

pleasure of being personally known to him.

“You must make allowance for the hasty sketch which is here given. The advanced state of your printing would not allow me time for a more elaborate investigation.

“Believe me, my dear sir,

“Very sincerely yours,

“W. BETHAM.”

We cannot close the illustrations of this ancient and venerable relic without adding an extract from a most interesting and authentic history of it contributed by our great Irish antiquarian, George Petrie, Esq., R.H.A., M.R.I.A, to the 18th vol. of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, together with an engraving of it taken from a drawing made by the same accomplished artist.

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"I shall endeavor to arrange these evidences in consecutive order.

"It is of importance to prove that this *cumdach*, or reliquary, has been from time immemorial popularly known by the name of *Domnach*, or, as it is pronounced, Donagh, a word derived from the Latin *Dominicus*. This fact is proved by a recent popular tale of very great power, by Mr. Carleton, called the 'Donagh,' in which the superstitious uses to which this reliquary has been long applied, are ably exhibited, and made subservient to the interests of the story. It is also particularly described under this name by the Rev. John Groyes in his account of the parish of Errigal-Keeroch in the third volume of Shaw Mason's Parochial Survey, page 163, though, as the writer states, it was not actually preserved in that parish.

"2. The inscriptions on the external case leave no doubt that the Domnach belonged to the monastery of Clones, or see of Clogher. The John O'Karbri, the *Comharb*, or successor of St. Tighernach, recorded, in one of those inscriptions as the person at whose cost, or by whose permission, the outer ornamental case was made, was, according to the Annals of the Four Masters, Abbot of Clones, and died in the year 1353. He is properly called in that inscription *Comorbanus*, or successor of Tighernach, who was the first Abbot and Bishop of the Church of Clones, to which place, after the death of St. Mac-Carthen, in the year 506, he removed the see of Clogher, having erected a new church, which he dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul. St. Tighernach, according to all our ancient authorities, died in the year 548.

"3. It appears from a fragment of an ancient life of St. Mac-Carthen, preserved by Colgan, that a remarkable reliquary was given by St. Patrick to that saint when he placed him over the see of Clogher.

"Et addidit, [Patricius] Accipo, inquit, baculum itineris mei, quo ego membra mea sustento et scrinium in quo de sanctorum Apostolorum reliquiis, et de sanctae Mariae capillis, et sancta Grace Domini, et sepulchro ejus, et aliis reliquiis sanctis continentur. Quibus dictis dimisit cum osculo pacis paterna fultum benedictione.'—*Colgan, Vit. S. Macaertheni* (24 Mart.) Acta SS. p. 738.

"From this passage we learn one great-cause of the sanctity in which this reliquary was held, and of the uses of the several recesses for reliques which it presents. It also explains the historical *rilievo* on the top—the figure of St. Patrick presenting the Domnach to St. Mac-Carthen.

"4. In Jocelyn's Life of St. Patrick (cap. 143) we have also a notice to the same effect, but in which the Domnach is called a *Chrismatorium*, and the relics are not specified—in all probability because they were not then appended to it.

"In these authorities there is evidently much appearance of the Monkish frauds of the middle ages; but still they are evidences of the tradition of the country that such a gift

had been made by Patrick to Mac-Carthen. And as we advance higher in chronological authorities, we find the notice of this gift stripped of much of its acquired garb of fiction, and related with more of the simplicity of truth.



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“5. In the life of St. Patrick called the Tripartite, usually ascribed to St. Evin, an author of the seventh century, and which, even in its present interpolated state, is confessedly prior to the tenth, there is the following remarkable passage (as translated by Colgan from the original Irish) relative to the gift of the Domnach from the Apostle of Ireland to St. Mac-Carthen, in which it is expressly described under the very same appellation which it still bears.

“ Aliquantis ergo evolutis diebus *Mac-Caertennum*, sive *Caerthennum* Episcopuin prsefecit sedi Episcopali Clocherensi, ab Ardmacha regni Metropoli haud multum distanti: et apud eum reliquit argenteum quoddam reliquarium *Domnach-airgidh* vulgo nuncupatum; quod viro Dei, in Hiberniam venienti, ccelitus missum erat.’—VII. *Vita S. Patricii*, Lib. in. cap. 3, *Tr. Th.* p. 149.

“This passage is elsewhere given by Colgan, with a slight change of words in the translation.

“In this version, which is unquestionably prior to all the others, we find the Domnach distinguished by the appellation of *Airgid*—an addition which was applicable only to its more ancient or silver plated case, and which could not with propriety be applied to its more recent covering, which in its original state had the appearance of being of gold.

“On these evidences—and more might probably be procured if time had allowed—we may, I think, with tolerable certainty, rest the following conclusions:

“1. That the Domnach is the identical reliquary given by St. Patrick to St. Mac-Carthen.

“2. As the form of the cumdach indicates that it was intended to receive a book, and as the relics are all attached to the outer and the least ancient cover, it is manifest that the use of the box as a reliquary was not its original intention. The natural inference therefore is, that it contained a manuscript which had belonged to St. Patrick; and as a manuscript copy of the Gospels, apparently of that early age, is found within it, there is every reason to believe it to be that identical one for which the box was originally made, and which the Irish apostle probably brought with him on his mission into this country. It is indeed, not merely possible, but even probable, that the existence of this manuscript was unknown to the Monkish biographers of St. Patrick and St. Mac-Carthen, who speak of the box as a scrinium or reliquary only. The outer cover was evidently not made to open; and some, at least, of the relics attached to it were not introduced into Ireland before the twelfth century. It will be remembered also that no superstition was and is more common in connection with the ancient cumdachs than the dread of their being opened.

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“These conclusions will, I think, be strengthened considerably by the facts, that the word *Domnach*, as applied either to a church, as usual, or to a reliquary, as in this instance, is only to be found in our histories in connection with St. Patrick’s time; and, that in the latter sense—its application to a reliquary—it only once occurs in all our ancient authorities, namely, in the single reference to the gift to St. Mac-Carthen; no other reliquary in Ireland, as far as can be ascertained, having ever been known by that appellation. And it should also be observed, that all the ancient reliques preserved in Ireland, whether bells, books, croziers, or other remains, have invariably and without any single exception, been preserved and venerated only as appertaining to the original founders of the churches to which they belonged.”

There is very little to be added, except that the Donagh was purchased for a few pounds from the old woman who owned it, by Mr. George Smith, of the house of Hodges and Smith, of College Green, Dublin, who very soon sold it for a large sum to the Honorable Mr. Westenra, in whose possession I presume it now is.