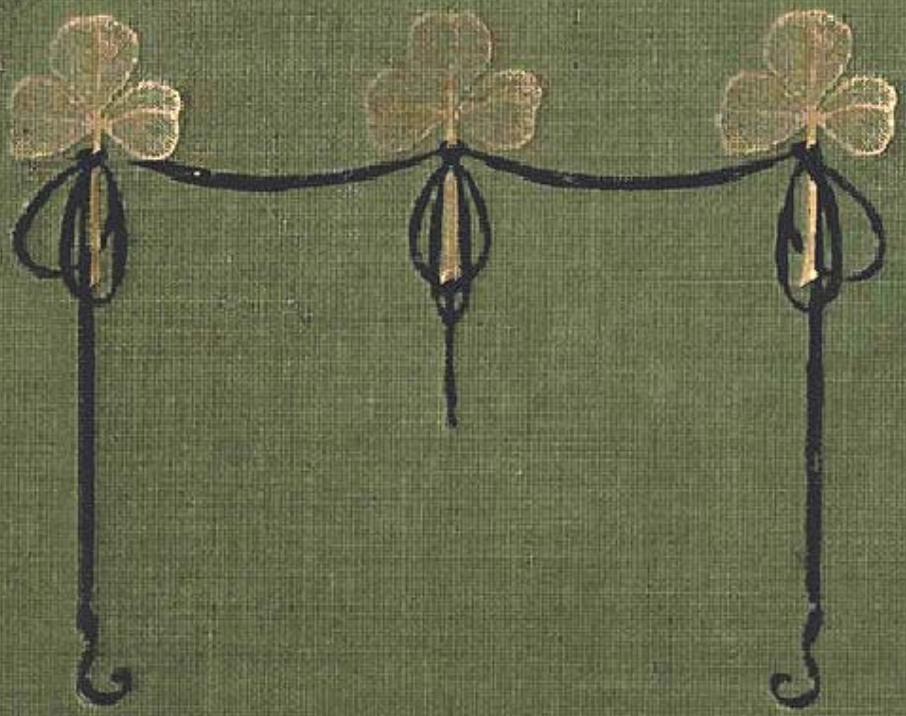
# The Ashes of Old Wishes
*and other*
# Darby O'Gill Tales



Herminie Templeton Kavanagh

# THE ASHES OF OLD WISHES

## *And Other Darby O'Gill Tales*

**Herminie Templeton Kavanagh**

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## 1: The Ashes of Old Wishes

ALL DAY long, big flakes of soft, wet snow had flurried and scurried and melted about Darby O'Gill's cottage, until, by twilight, the countryside was neither more nor less than a great white bog. Then, to make matters worse, as the night came on, that rapscallion of an east wind waked up, and came sweeping with a roar through the narrow lanes and over the desolate fields, gleefully buffeting and nipping every living thing in its way. It fairly tore the fur cap off Maurteen Cavanaugh's head, and gaily tossed that precious relic into the running ditch; it shrieked mockingly as it lifted poor old Mrs. Maloney's red cloak and swirled that tattered robe over the good woman's bewildered head, twisting her this way and that till she was so distracted, she had to go into Joey Hoolighan's for a sip of hot tea and a soothering bit of fresh gossip. Then growing more uproarious, the blackguard gale, after swooping madly around and around Darby O'Gill's cottage, leaped to the roof and perched itself on the very top of the chimney, where, for three mortal hours, it sat shouting down boisterous challenge to the discontented man who crouched moody and silent before his own smoky hearth.

Darby heard the challenge well enough, but wasted little heed. A shapeless worry darkened the lad's mind. Ever since supper, when Bridget and the children went to bed— the better to get an early start for midnight Christmas Mass— Darby and Malachi, the yellow cat, sat opposite each other in the glow of the smoldering turf. There's nothing can equal in its comfort the comfortableness of a contented cat.

Lately Darby had taken great satisfaction in talking to Malachi. The cat proved to be a splendid listener— never contradicting any statement, however boastful, but receiving all his master's confidences with a blinking gravity that was as respectful as it was flattering.

"This is Christmas Eve, Malachi. I suppose ye know that. I'm going to tell ye a great saycrit. By all the tokens, I ought to be a happy man. Well, you'll be surprised— I am n't! I'm far, far from it! Everything in the world is growing moldy. Nothin' tastes as it used to taste. Have ye noticed the flavor of the petaties lately, Malachi, or the tang of the bacon? No, to be sure, how could ye?" Darby discontentedly scratched his head with the stem of his pipe and heaved a deep sigh. "Heigh ho! Oh, what petaties we used to get when I was a gossoon! The way Bridget could bile cabbage in the ould days would be a model for a quane, so it would. But, now— well, we won't disparage her. There's nothing I put into me mouth has the right smack to it. There's something or other I want bad, Malachi,

and— whisht!"— he bent over—"and this is me saycrit: I dunno rightly what it is I want, but whatever it is, I'll never be rightly happy till I get it."

Darby had often claimed that Malachi, with a blink of his green eye, could tell the unspoken word in a man's mind. Sure, everyone knew how, at the first breath of a rise in Bridget's temper, the wise old lad would, with one nimble spring, land on the cottage roof, and there, safe from the broom, he would crouch, peering over the edge of the thatch till the storm went down. So now, visibly impressed with the great secret, Malachi turned his back to the fire and began thoughtfully stroking his left ear.

While the cat was thus engaged, the peaceful quiet of the hearth was rudely broken by a sudden shaking of the door and a rattling of the latch, as though nervous fingers were striving to lift it. Darby, in alarm, threw back his head to listen. Could it be a wraith? No! it was only the wind. Baffled in its attempt to open the door, the ruffian gale then began flinging white dabs of soft snow at the black window panes— for all the world like a blackguard boy. At last, with an exultant shout, it leaped to the cottage roof again and, whoop! down the chimney it came.

"Poof! bad cess to the smoke an' bad luck to the wind, if they haven't the two eyes stung out of me head. I'd wind the clock and you and me'd go to bed this minute, so we would, Malachi, if I didn't know that Brian Connors, the King of the Fairies, would surely pay us a wisit the night." Malachi's back stiffened immediately, and with quick, indignant switches of his tail, he swept the hearthstone where he sat.

"Oh, I know ye don't like the Good People, me lad, and you may have yer raysons. But you must admit that the little man has never failed to bring us some token for Christmas since first I met him. Though, to tell the truth," he added, a sudden scowl furrowing his face, "for a man who has the whole worruld in his pocket, the fairy gives— oh, by the powers, Malachi! I came near forgetting to tell ye me dhrame. I dhramed last night I was picking up goold suverings till me back ached. So, maybe the king'll bring me some thraymendous present— oh, millia murdher, me sight's gone entirely this time. Conshumin' to the minute longer I'll stay up— phew! ugh! ugh! ugh!"

The great puff of bitter pungent smoke that blinded the lad's eyes also sent him off into a fit of coughing. He was still choking and gasping and sweeping the water from his swimming lids when, happening to look up, whom should he spy through the blue smoke, calmly sitting on his favorite stool on the opposite side of the hearth, but the little Master of the Fairies himself. As usual, the King's gold

crown was tilted rakishly to one side, his green velvet cloak was flung back from his shoulders, and he sat with one short pipestem of a leg dangling carelessly over the other. Put into a scale, he might have weighed, crown and all, about as much as Malachi.

"The top of the avenin' to ye, Darby O'Gill," piped he, "an' the complyments of the sayson to you an' yours."

At the first sound of the fairy's voice, Malachi, with tail erect, trotted out of the kitchen.

"The same to yerself," coughed Darby, rubbing his eyes, "an' if it isn't axing ye to go out of yer way too much, King, I'll thank ye afther this to come in by the dure or the windy, and not be takin' thim shortcuts down through the chimbley. You nearly put the two eyes out of me head, so ye did."

"Oh! faith, Darby, me sowl," laughed the King good-naturedly, "the Christmas present I've brought ye'll put the two eyes back again, and brighter than ever."

The discontented look on Darby's face changed at once to a red glow of pleasure. He expected a bag of diamonds or a crock of gold at the very least. Still he strove hard to conceal his delight and said as carelessly as he could, "What is it, King darlint. I'll go bail your present's a grand one this time, at any rate."

"You may well say that, me lad, for I've brought ye," chuckled the King, clasping his knee and leaning back comfortably against the chimney corner—"I've brought ye a jug of the foinest potteen in all Ireland ground."

Darby's jaw dropped to his chest. If ever hope took a cropper, it was then. "Th-thank ye kindly, King," he stuttered; and to hide his bitter disappointment, the poor fellow began poking viciously at the smoldering turf.

The evident chagrin of his friend was not lost on the Master of the Good People, and the quick-tempered little King flared up instantly.

"Why, thin, bad manners to you, what ails you the night— you and your sour looks? So my present isn't grand enough for you, and the loikes of you. Maybe it's the py-losopher's stone or maybe it's riches or—"

Darby himself was thoroughly aroused. He felt slighted and belittled. Hammering out each word on the hearthstone, he replied, "You're right, King, it's riches I want! It's riches; an' that's the laste ye might be afther givin' me."

The fairy's eyes snapped threateningly. "Haven't I tould ye ag'in and ag'in that I'd never rune ye an' spile ye by givin' ye riches? Haven't—"

"We hear ducks talkin'! No sinsible man, King, was runed or spiled by riches. Besides, there's other things ye might give me."

The little king's lip curled. "Oh, ye ongrateful omadhaun! Just to punish ye, I've a mind to—" he hesitated and looked steadily at Darby. "By jayminie, I will— I'll give ye any three wishes you make this night, barrin' riches. I won't break me worrud on that score."

So great and so sudden was the offer that, for a moment, Darby's mind floundered helplessly. Meekly subsiding to his stool again, he peered from under anxious brows and asked doubtingly, "Do you mane it, King?"

The king frowned. "I do mane it; but the consequences'll be on your own sore head."

Darby thoughtfully regarded the fairy. Then, putting the poker carefully back in the corner, he said, "Don't be vexed with me, King agra; sure I've lots of throuble. I'm a very onhappy man. I don't know why it is, but I'm feelin' turrible. So, by your lave, if it's perfectly convaynient, I'll take the favors of the three wishes."

"Out with them then! What do ye want?"

"Well, first an' foremost, King, I want the he-licks-her of life, that Maurteen Cavanaugh was readin' about. I want to live forever."

The old king reeled and almost fell off the stool.

"By the four fires of Fingal, Darby O'Gill, if you don't flog the worruld. But go on, man alive, what'll ye be wantin' next?"

"Well, afther that, if it's not too much throuble, ye may make me as comfortable an' as well off as the rich Lord Killgobbin." By putting the wish this way, Darby cleverly avoided a direct request for riches.

The king shut his lips in a grim smile and slowly wagged his head.

"I will that! I'll make ye as well off an' as comfortable as Lord Killgobbin— with every vein of me heart. Go on!"

"The third wish, King, is the easiest of all to grant. Make me happy."

"That I will! Ye won't know yerself. Wait till I'm done with ye," said the king, getting up and drawing his cloak about his shoulders. "An' we'll lose no time about it ayther. We've a good dale of thravelin' to do the night, so put on you're great coat."

Nothing loath, the lad did as he was bid and then waited expectantly.

"We're goin' into sthrange places, me bould Trojan," the king went on, "an' I think it best we go unwisible. Come nearer to me."

With much impressiveness, the little King of the Good People raised his hand and touched his companion lightly on the arm.

On the moment, a strange, tingling chill swept over Darby, and he began to grow invisible. First his feet faded into thin air; and even as he stared open-mouthed at the place they had been, his knees disappeared; and the next second, the lad felt himself snuffed out like a tallow dip.

The king also was gone, but presently the familiar voice of the little fairy sounded from its place on the stool:

"We're goin' out now, avourneen."

"But how can I go out," wailed Darby in great distress. "Where are me two foine legs? What's become of me, I'd like to know?"

"Be aisy, man! You'll not nade yer legs for a while. I'll put ye asthride a horse the night, the loike of which you never rode afore. You're goin' to ride the wind, Darby. Listen! D'ye hear it callin' us?"

Darby was still looking for some traces of his vanished legs when, without realizing the slightest sense of motion, he found himself in the open. There was a flash of black sky, a glimpse of wet weather, and the astonished man was three miles from home, standing beside the king in old Daniel Delaney's kitchen. It was all so sudden; he could scarcely believe his eyes. And to make matters more confusing, although Darby had known old Dan'l's kitchen since childhood, there was a certain weirdness and unreality about it now that chilled the unseen intruder's blood.

The room was almost dark and filled with fitful fireshadows that danced and wavered and dimmed upon the walls.

"Mark well what ye see and hear, Darby O'Gill, for this is but a shadow of your first wish— the wish to live forever. This is the ashes of long life." The king's voice was so solemn that Darby cowered, half-frightened from it.

Before the lonely hearth sat old Daniel Delaney and his wife, Julia. Half the county knew their desolate history. Ninety-two years had passed over their heads, and seventy years they had lived together as man and wife. Of all the old couples in that parish— and there were many of them— Daniel Delaney and his wife were the very oldest, and the loneliest. Twenty years ago, their last child had died in America, an old man. Long before that, Teddy, Michael, and Dan, soldier lads, fell before Sebastopol. And now, without chick or child, indeed without one of their blood that bore their name, the old couple waited patiently, each night mumbling the hope that maybe the morrow might bring to them the welcome deliverance.

As Darby gazed, a comprehension of the desolation, the loneliness, and the ceaseless heartache of the old people came to him like an inspiration, and his heart melted with pity.

He understood, as never before, how completely old Dan'l and Julia's world was gone— faded into vague memories. The new voices and strange young faces that kept constantly crowding into and filling the old fond nooks gave to the couple a cruel sense of being aliens in an unsympathetic land. The winding lanes, the well-remembered farms, and the crowded chapel were filled, for them, with specters. They were specters themselves, and the quiet waiting churchyard called ever and ever, with passionate insistence to their tired, empty hearts. Darby's eyes filled with hot tears.

"Will I be like Dan'l Delaney?" he whispered fearfully to the king.

"Worse. You'll be all alone; Bridget'll be gone from you. Hist! Dan'l is talking. Listen!"

"Is that you, Julia machree?" an old voice quavered. "Ah, so it is, so it is! I thought it was me father sittin' there an'— an' I was a little gossoon again at his knee— just like our little Mickey. Where's Mickey? Oh, to be sure! Oh, thin wasn't me father the handsome man— and grand! Six feet two in his stockin's! Six feet two. An' to think, agra, to think that now, in all this wide, wide worruld, only you and me are left who ever set eyes on him. Isn't it a quare worruld entirely, Julia! A quare worruld! Only you and me left, all dead, all dead!" The old man's voice fell to a whimper, and he wiped a tear from his cheek with shaking fingers.

"Aye, they're all gone from us, Dan'l, me lad. I was just thinkin', your father's father built this house and sthrangers'll have it soon— I couldn't sleep last night for worrying over it. All me foine boys and tendher, beautiful colleens! All, all gone. An' one gray day follys another gray day, an' nothing happens, nothing ever happens for us. Isn't this Christmas Eve, Dan'l? Little Norah's birthday?"

The old man lifted his trembling hands in an agony of regret. "Christmas Eve! O Mother of Heaven! Oh, the merry-makin' an' the happiness of the childher! Marcyful Father, why can't we go to them?"

"Hush, Dan'l! For shame, man. Think how good God has been to us. Hasn't He kept us together? Mightn't He have taken you an' left me here alone? See how gentle He is with ould people. First, He crowds Heaven with their friends to prepare a welcome; then He fills the worruld so full of pains, an' aches, an' sorrow, that it is no throuble at all to lave it. No throuble at all."

"God help them," thought Darby. The bitterness of their sorrows filled his own heart, and the weight of all their years pressed down on him.

"King," he asked, "isn't it quare that we can't always be young and live forever?"

"It's bekase you've no knowledge of Heaven that you ax so foolish a question as that," sighed the King.

Meanwhile old Dan'l would not be comforted, but was fretting and whimpering, like a child three years old.

"Come away, come away, King," urged Darby hoarsely. "When Bridget an' the childher are in the churchyard, I want to lie with them. Ye may keep the he-licks-her, King. I want none of it."

"I thought so. Now for your second wish," said the king.

The words weren't out of his mouth till Darby found himself standing with the fairy in the window recess of a large and brilliantly lighted bedroom in Killgobbin Castle. Soft, moss-green carpets an inch thick covered the floor. Slender shepherds and dainty shepherdesses, beautiful dames and stately knights smiled and curtsied from the priceless tapestries on the wall. In a far corner of the room stood a canopied mahogany bed, lace-draped and with snowy pillows. Gilded tables and luxurious easy chairs were scattered here and there, while a great tiger skin, which gleamed yellow and black from the center of the floor, gave Darby a catch in his breath. It might have been the bedchamber of a king. Here no sound of the storm could reach.

Before a bright, hot fire of fine seacoals, sat the rich and powerful Lord Killgobbin, grayhaired and shaggy-browed. His lordship's right leg, bandaged and swollen, rested upon a low chair piled high with cushions. On a fur rug near him lay Fifi, her ladyship's old spaniel— the fattest, ugliest dog Darby had ever seen.

"Darby," whispered the king, "yonder is Lord Killgobbin, and remember I was to make you as comfortable and as well off as he!"

The fairy was still speaking when the nobleman let a roar out of him that rattled the fire irons. "My supper! Where's my supper? Get out of that, you red-legged omahdaun!" he bellowed to a crimson liveried servant who waited, cowering just inside the door. "Bring up my supper at once, or I'll have your heart's blood. No puling bread and milk, mind you, but a rousing supper for Christmas Eve. Be off!"

The footman disappeared like a flash, leaving the room door ajar. Sweet sounds of flute, violin, and harp, mingled with merry laughter, floated up the wide staircase. Lord Killgobbin's only son was giving a Yule party to his young friends. At the sound of the music, the old nobleman uttered a moan that would wring one's heart. "Oh dear, oh dear, will ye listen to that. Dancing an' cavorting an'

enjoying themselves down there, an' me sitting up here, suffering the torments, an' nobody caring a ha'porth whether I'm living or dead. Oh my, oh my! Sitting here trussed up like an ould roosther." His lordship's eye roved around the room in a vain quest for sympathy; alas, the smug-faced Fifi was the only living thing to be seen.

"Bad scran to you! You're as hard-hearted as your misthress." Lord Killgobbin threatened the dog with his cane. But as if to show her disdain, Fifi yawned in a bored way, turned wearily over, and went to sleep again. It was the last straw. His lordship boiled with furious resentment and, leaning far over, made a savage stroke at the dog with his cane. That was the unlucky blow! Instead of hitting the placid, unconscious Fifi, the furious old lord lost his balance, missed his aim, and gave himself a terrific whack on the gouty leg. There was the row!

Never since that day at Ballinrobe Fair, when Teddy McHale cracked his poor old father over the head with a blackthorn (mistaking the old gentleman for Peter Maloney, the family foe) had Darby heard such deafening roars, and such blood-curdling maledictions. Whether by accident or in an effort to drown Lord Killgobbin's voice, the orchestra downstairs played with redoubled vigor.

In the midst of the tumult, hurrying footsteps were heard upon the stairs, and presently, three wild-eyed footmen entered the room, each bearing a silver tray. The first servant carried a bowl of thin gruel, the second a plate of dry toast and the salt, while the third footman stepped cautiously along, bearing aloft a small pot of weak tea, without cream or sugar. The quiet, grim look that Lord Killgobbin threw at his terrified servants sent a shiver down Darby's back.

With eyes half-shut, his lordship spoke slowly and deliberately, through clenched teeth: "What's that ye have in the bowl, ye divil's limb ye?"

"The dicthor, your Lordship— an' her ladyship, sir, seein' as it's Christmas Eve, thought that you'd like— that you'd like a— a little change, so instead of bread an'— an' milk, they sent ye a little thin gruel, sir."

Lord Killgobbin grew ominously quiet. "Bring it over to me, my good man. Don't be afraid," he cajoled.

The three footmen, each keeping a wary eye on his lordship's stick, advanced timidly in a row. Nothing was said or done until the gruel was within easy grip of him, and then, in one furious sweep of his left arm, his lordship sent the tray and gruel halfway up to the ceiling, while with his right hand, he managed to bring the cane down with a resounding whack on the head of the unfortunate footman who carried the toast and salt.

Instantly all was confusion. While the frightened servants were scrambling after the scattered trays and dishes, Lord Killgobbin reached quickly around for the coal-scuttle, which stood near his hand, and began a furious bombardment. Two of the footmen managed to escape unhurt from the room. The third, however, by an unlucky stumble over the rug, went to the floor on his back in the corner. There he lay, cowering and, with the tray, shielding his head from the furious rain of coal.

"The curse of the crows on ye all," shouted Killgobbin. "You'd starve me, would yez?"

"Yes, sir— I— I mane no, your Lordship!" roared the terrified servant.

"Christmas Eve and a bowl of gruel!" Bang, bang, bang! rattled the coals on the tray! "Christmas Eve with a sliver of toast and tay." Bang, bang, bang!

"Yes, sir." Bang! "Oh, me head, sir! Oh, me head, sir! Ow, wow! I'm kilt entirely, sir!"

"Me wife'd starve me—"

"Yes, sir, ow! Ouch! I mane no, sir."

"Me son's in conspiracy with the docthor—"

"Yes sir." Bang, bang, bang!

"Take that! Beef tay and dhry toast. I haven't had a meal fit for a dog in six weeks; six weeks, d'ye hear me, ye sniveling rapscallion?"

"No, sir— I— I mane yes, sir!"

"You're killing me by inches, so ye are! Ye murdherin' ringleaders ye."

"Yes, sir. Ouch! I mane no, sir!"

Darby turned a disappointed face to the Master of the Fairies. "Thanks be we're unwisible, King. I wouldn't have that leg of Killgobbin's for all the money in the four provinces."

"Bah! Everybody's bread is butthered with trouble to about the same thickness. This is the ashes of foine living. His lordship'd thrade his castle an' all his grandeur for your pair of legs. But you've only seen his gout. The rale, botherin' trouble is comin' up the stairs now." Even as the king spoke, Darby heard the rustle of a lady's dress upon the landing.

"Come away, come away, King," he urged excitedly. "It isn't dacint to be listening to family saycrits. I forgive ye me first two wishes, an' I'll ax only for the third: Make me happy— it's all I'll ax."

"Oh, aye, the happiness! Sure enough! Truth, I almost forgot the happiness. But never fear; it'll have ye dancin' an' jumpin' along the road before ye raich home."

One may get a good idea of how quickly the pair shifted from place to place that night when one learns that this last saying of the king was begun in Lord Killgobbin's bedchamber and finished so far away down the road that all which remained of the castle was a faint twinkle of lights on the distant hill.

And now the east wind, weary of mischief, had traveled on out over the sea, leaving behind flattened hedgerows, twisted thatches, and desolate highways.

To Darby's great surprise, he found himself and the king huddled together under the dripping eaves of a low, thatched building that crouched by the wayside.

"Be-gar, King, that was a long jump we med. I'm only half a mile from home. This is Joey Hoolighan's smithy."

"Thrue for ye, Darby, me bouchal," answered the king. "I've brought ye here to show ye the only ralely, thruly happy man in this townland. Ye may take a look at him; he's sittin' within."

Darby drew back thoughtfully. This was to be the last of the three wishes; and the fate of the other two made him hesitate.

"Tell me first, King, before I look: Is he a married man? I dunno."

"He is not," said the king.

"Of course," sighed Darby, "careless and free. Well, is he rich? But sure I naden't ax. He must be— very."

"He hasn't a penny," replied the king, "nor chick nor child. He cares for nobody, an' nobody cares for him."

"Well, now look at that! Isn't that quare! What kind of a man is he? I'm almost afeared to look at him."

"Sthop yer blatherin', man alive, an' come over to the windy and do as I bid ye."

As he was bidden, Darby took a peep through the grimy panes, and there on a pile of turf, alone before the dying forge-fire, sat an old man. His head was bare, and he swayed back and forth as he nodded and gabbled and smiled to the graying embers. With an exclamation of deep disgust, Darby jumped back.

"Why," he spluttered indignantly, "You're making game of me, King! That's only Tom, the child— the poor innocent who never had an ounce of wit since the day he was born!"

"I know it," said the king. "That is the rayson he's perfectly happy. He has no regret for yesterday nor no fear for tomorrow. He's had his supper, there's a fire ferninst him, a roof over his head for the night, so what more does he want?"

For a moment, Darby couldn't answer. He stood humped together, ready to cry with vexation and disappointment.

"There goes the last of me three grand wishes," he complained bitterly. "I'm chated out of all of them, an' all you've left me for me night's throuble is the ashes of me wishes, a cowld in my chist from me wet brogues, an' a croak in me talk, so that I wouldn't know me own voice if I was in the next room. If you've done wid me now, King, I'll thank ye to make me wisible ag'in so that I can go home to me own dacint fambly."

"Not yet awhile, Darby," answered the king. "I haven't made ye happy. And ye'll not see the inside of yer house tonight until ye'll say from the bottom of yer heart that ye're ralely and thruly happy."

"Never mind," wailed the lad, "I want no more of yer thricks and dayludherin's. Ye may take away yer jug of potteen, too. An' all I want now is a sight of me own two legs to take me home to Bridget."

There was no reply. Darby waited a moment in silence, and then the horrible realization flashed over him that he was alone. Doubtless the quick-tempered little fairy had taken offense at his words and had left him to his fate, invisible and helpless, on the highroad. The poor fellow groaned aloud: "Ochone mavrone, haven't I the misfortune!" he wailed. "I'm fairly massacreed, so I am! What'll Bridget say to have a poor, hoarse voice goin' croaking about the house instid of the foine-lookin' man I was. Oh, vo! vo!" he roared. "I wondher if I can ate me vittles! What'll do with the new shuit of clothes? What'll I say to—"

"Hould on to whatever's botherin' ye, Darby, me friend. Don't be afeared. I'm comin' to ye!" It was the king's voice high in the air above Darby's head. The next instant, our hero felt a touch upon the arm, and he and the king popped into clear visibility again.

Darby heaved a chest-splitting sigh of relief. "I thought you'd deserted me, King."

"Foolish man," piped the fairy. "I was loathe to have ye go home disappointed and empty-handed, but to save me life, I didn't know what ye naded that'd do you any good. So I flew off with meself to your house, and Malachi, the cat, tould me that ye naded something; ye didn't know exactly what it was, but whatever it was, ye'd never be happy till ye got it!"

"It's thrue for ye, thim were me very worruds."

"Well, I'll lave ye here now, Darby," the king went on, seriously but not unkindly. "And do you hurry along your way. Look naythor to the right nor to the

left, an' somewhere on the road, betwixt this an' your own thrashol', the thing that'll do ye most good in the worruld'll catch up with ye. I'm off."

"Good night, King," and Darby, left alone, splashed along the slushy road toward home. The lad whistled anxiously a bit of a tune as he went, all the time keeping wary eyes and ears strained for the first glimpse or sound of the expected gift.

"I wondher what it'll be like," he said to himself over and over again. He had reached the tall hedge of Hagan's meadow and was already laughing and chuckling to himself over a sudden remembrance of Lord Killgobbin's butler roaring in the corner, when suddenly, something happened that brought him to a dead stop in the road.

Swift as lightning, there darted through the lad's jaw a pain like the twang of a fiddlestring. At first, Darby couldn't understand the agony, for never until that unhappy hour had one of the O'Gills been afflicted with the toothache. However, he was not left long in doubt as to its character, for the next twang brought him up to his tiptoes with both hands grasping the side of his face.

"Oh, murdher in Irish, what's come over me! By the powers of Moll Hagan's cat, 'tis the toothache." He danced round and round in his tracks, groan following groan; but whichever way he turned, there was neither pity nor comfort in the dark, sighing hedges, nor in the gloomy, starless canopy.

Then a fiercer twang than all the others put together took the lad up into the air. Faster and faster they came, throb, throb, throb, like the blows of a hammer.

At last, the poor man broke into a run, as if to escape from the terrible pain, but as fast as he went, the throb in his jaw kept time and tune to his flying feet.

"Oh, am n't I the foolish man to be gallivantin' around this blessed night, pryin' into other people's business. It's a punishment. I wish I had that rapscallion of a king here now." He moaned as he reached the stile leading into his own field.

"That wish is granted at any rate, Darby asthore! What's your hurry?"

There on the top of the stile, quizzical, cheery, and expectant, waited the little fairy.

"Ow-um! Is this pain in the tooth the bliggard present you promised me, Brian Connors?"

"It is. I came to the conclusion that you wor actually blue-molded for want of a little rale throuble, so I gave it to ye. Ye naded a joult or two to make ye appreciate how well off ye wor before."

Friend or no friend, if Brian Connors had been a mortal man instead of the king of all the fairies in Ireland, there would have flared a ruction out in the night-

covered road that both of them afterwards could not well forget. But what good to lift hand or foot to one who could paralyze them both with a flash of a wish. All the bothered man could do was to hold his cheek in both hands and grumble.

"Well, small thanks to ye for your present, King. If a man nades throuble, he don't have to go thrampin' around all night lookin' for it with the loikes of you."

"Tonight ye wanted for a Christmas present three handfuls of ould ashes; before an hour is over, you'll rayelize that no lord in Ireland ground got a finer Christmas present. You are like all the rest of the worruld, Darby O'Gill. You never appreciate what you have till you lose it. A man spinds his happiest days grunting and groaning, but tin years afther they're over an' gone, he says to himself, 'Gob , wer'n't thim the happy, happy times?' If I take away the toothache, will ye be raysonably happy, Darby? I dunno."

The persecuted man's spirit rose in unreasoning rebellion. "No, I won't," he shouted.

"Thin kape it. Please yerself. Good night." And the place where the friendly little king had been sitting was empty. He had vanished utterly.

"Come back, come back, King!" howled Darby. "I was a fool. Ouch! Oh, the top of me head went that time. If you'll only take away this murdherin' pain, King, I'll be the happiest man in Ireland ground, so I will."

The appeal was no sooner uttered than the pain left him, and a soft, friendly laugh floated down through the darkness.

"You'll find the jug of potteen snug by the dure, avick, and all the happiness any mortal man's entitled to waiting for ye beyant the thrashol'— an' that's nothing more nor less than peace and plenty, and a warm-hearted, clear-headed woman for a wife and eight of the purtiest childher in the county of Tipperary. Go in to thim. Don't be fretting yourself anymore over amayaginary throubles; for as sure as ye do, the toothache'll take a hammer or two at your gooms just to kape ye swate-minded an' cheerful. The complyments of the sayson to you an' yours. I'm off."

The king's voice, lifted in a song, floated farther and farther away:

*If you've mate whin you're hungry,*
*And dhrink whin you're dhry,*
*Not too young whin you're married,*
*Nor too ould whin you die*
*Thin go happy, go lucky;*
*Go lucky, go happy;*

*Poor happy go lucky,*
*Goodbye, goodbye,*
*Bould happy go lucky*
*Goodbye.*

The song died away like a sigh of the wind in the hedges. Then clear and sweet broke the chapel bell across the listening field, calling the parish, young and old, to midnight Mass. As Darby turned, he saw every window in his cottage ablaze with cheerful light, and his own face glowed in warm response. With his hand on the door, he paused and murmured, 'Why thin, afther this night, I'll always say that the man who can't find happiness in his own home naden't look for it elsewhere."

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## 2: The Haunted Bell

### Part I

I SUPPOSE yer honor, like all the rest of the world, has heard of the terrible night of the Big Wind, but I have my doubt whether yer honor ever has been tould how that unnatural storm arose from a certain wild thransaction betwixt Beelzebub and a gran'father of me own. The fact is that Sattin, on that memorable night, in rage and turpitation ag'in me laynial ansister, let loose the iliments of rain and wind and thunder in a furious endayvor to disthroy the whole Irish nation.

Faith so it was, and it's meself that'll be proud to relate the sarcumstances as we dhrive along.

Me gran'father Jerry Murtaugh— the heavens be his bed!— was a carman by thrade, an' barrin' one unsignificant fault, was as good a man as ever put feet into brogues. An' that same failing was no more nor less than a daycided parshality for a game of cyards; he'd gamble the coat off his back and— this is a part of me story— he's done it.

'Twas seldom that me gran'father ever lost a game, d'ye mind, for he and his thrusted comrade, Tim Maylowney, had betwixt themselves such a system of saycrit signs and signals and tokens for playin' that the crook of a finger, the lift of an eyebrow, or the twist of a lip had each its well-known maning; and then again, the pair had such gr-reat skill in mixing and shufflin' the cyards that a sthranger stood as little chanst ag'in the two as if he had been born blind. Howandever, me gran'father, bein' a just man, med it a sthrict rule never to play for more than sixpence a game. He had a pious feeling that to chate for more than sixpence a game wouldn't be honest.

You'll agree that there was a taste of excuse for this great fondness for cyards, bekase a carter's trade takes him into all kinds of distant places an' laves him many a lonely night to while away. Me gran'father often druve as far as the Killinturf hills, and, in thim days, the same hills were a good fufty miles from the Sleive-na-mon Mountains. So ye see by this what a great thraveler the poor man had to be.

But, notwithstandin' his daily timptaytions, me gran'father had vartues too many to count. He could lift with his bare hands a load that it'd take two common men to budge; he could run like a bear and lep like a deer; no one ever saw the sign of dhrink on him even after he had put down a gallon; while as for fightin'—

well, there was only one other man in the barony who could stan' ferninst him: his buzzum friend, Tim Maylowney.

Indade, I think there was only one mortil man on airth me gran'father was afeard of, an' that same one was me gran'mother, an' she no bigger than a wisp of hay, as the sayin' is.

Now, this same Tim Maylowney bein' likewise a carter, he an' me gran'father always sthrove to manage to take their thrips together. This sometimes med it mighty inconvanient for the parish, bekase, such prime favorites were the two at home in Ballinderg that a neighbor'd be very loathe to give his job of carryin' to one carman, lest, by so doin', he'd be dayprivin' the other. So, for that rayson, whin the bell for the chapel was to be carted from Carrickthor to Ballinderg, ye may well aymagine how sore vexed an' perplexed was the whole parish to daycide whether Tim Maylowney or me gran'father was to have the honor of the job.

The way Ballinderg came to have a bell at all, at all was this away: Father Murphy of the rich parish of Carrickthor had a beautiful thraymendous new bell given to him by Lord Killinerg; so what did Father Murphy do but donate his ould bell— an' a grand one it was— to his friend Father O'Leary of Ballinderg. (The two clargymen long ago were collations together at the same college in France.) But whin they came to take the dayminsions of the bell, it was found to be too large for the chapel tower. Howandever, that throuble didn't last long, for the parish came together and soon raised the belfry tower close beside the chapel itself.

Now, of course, aich of our two cronies wanted for himself the honor of carting the bell from Carrickthor. An' the only pay he'd ax or expect for carrin' the bell would be the credit it'd bring to himself and family and their generations afther thim till the day of judgment. Some of the parish sided with me gran'father, others with Tim Maylowney, an' Father O'Leary was fairly at his wits' end to know which side to take. So what does the good man do but call a meetin' at the chapel steps for Sunday afthernoon, that he might put the question to a vote— in that way, the raysponsibility'd be on the congregaytion, d'ye see?

Howandever, whin the time for the meetin' was come, an' all the people, men, women and children, were gathered in the churchyard, me gran'father, with that wisdom which the rayputable people say has always run in our family, walked firmly up the chapel steps and stood just below the clargyman, where, afther wavin' his hand for attintion, he cried, "Let the bell be put on Tim Maylowney's cart," he says, "an' let me own two foine ponies, Anthony an'

Clayopathra, dhraw the cart," sez he. "That'll make things ayquil, an' there will be no ha-ard feelin's." Ah, then wasn't he the saygacious man!

I needn't tell that thim pathriotic worruds sint the multitude dancin' wild with dayloight and admayration. I'm tould that the cheerin' was heard by Father Nale himself in Ballinthubber. Through all the hurrayin' an' hurrooin', me gran'father, solemn an' proud, stood planted on the steps, his arms folded, lookin' for all the worruld like the ould ancient hayro, Hayjax, dayfyin' the weather.

As Father O'Leary stood waitin' for the cheerin' to stop, it was aisy to see that a funny joke was stirrin' in the good man's mind; for he kept chucklin' to himself an' half-explodin' with laughter; he couldn't spake a worrud durin' a full minute, but waited with his hand pressed agin his mouth, keepin' back the marriment. Even the little childher knew be this sign that a raymarkable joke was to the fore; an' half the parish was in roars at the fun they knew was comin' before the good man opened his lips.

"Me childher," says he, ketchin' his breath, "these two good neighbors, Jerry Murtaugh an' Tim Maylowney, are going two long days' journey to Carrickthor for us, an' two hard days' journey back ag'in, expectin' no more pay than my blessing an' your thanks."

"They are! They are!' roared the parish, splittin' with laughter, poking aich other in the ribs and welting one another on the back. The women were stuffin' their shawls in their mouths.

"But they're far mistaken," the priest wint on.

"They are! They are!" ag'in shouted the whole churchyard.

"We can't give them money," says his riverence, "but we'll pay them with something else which no fire can burn, no thafe can stayle, an' no wather can drown, so long as the bell hangs in that tower," and for a minute, he stood pinting at the tower, while, as you may well aymagine, the crowd was swaying an' surgin' with excited merriment.

"He's goin' to give them the bell itself," shouted long Pether McCarthy.

"He is! He is!" roared everyone else.

"No, no, no!" warned his reverence. "Nothin' of the kind," says he. "We'll give thim for their pay— we'll give thim," says he, lookin' roguish at me gran'father— "the music of the bell."

For five wild minutes, one couldn't have heard the bell itself above the jolly uproar over this good joke. Everyone was screeching and screamin' except me gran'father, who, loike all great thravelers, was not much given to fryvolity. He

stood one leg in front of the other, his arms still folded and not a sound out of his two pressed lips.

So, in this way, the matther was daycided, and then and there settled. Tim Maylowney would donate the cart, and me gran'father was to give his ponies to dhraw it home.

But, ochone mavrone, if the parish had rayalized what fright and disthress was to folly in the wake of that same funny joke, 'twould have been terrified faces, instead of merry ones they'd have brought home with them on that ayventful night.

However, no one foresaw the unlucky fuchure, so, bright an' airly the next mornin', our two carters, sittin' side by side in Tim Maylowney's cart, proud as two blue and yellow spotted paycocks, started for Carrickthor with Anthony an' Clayopathra, to the fore.

## Part II

WELL, SORRA thing worth mentionin' happened till the expaydition arrived at Father Murphy's house, an' there, afther much histin' an' pullin' an' gruntin' an' shoutin', the bell was lifted onto the cart and fastened in. The next morning at cockcrow, with the wind to their backs, the proud beneyfactors started home.

The first day's journey back passed aisy an' peaceful enough, only it was harrud work on the two hayros to be ridin' along side by side, pious and saydate, mindin' their tongues for fear of sayin' wan unrayligious worrud with the chapel bell listining in the cart behind. But black an' airly their troubles began the last day of the journey. They were about an hour on the road an' had raiched Kelly's bog— me gran'father was dhrivin'— whin the left front wheel dhropped intil a rut, and before one could say "Jack Robinson", me gran'father was trun off his seat and landed on his head in the ditch, with Maylowney scrambling on top of him. But worse luck of all, the axle was broke, and our two pious min near suffocayted with anger.

"If the bell behind wasn't a chapel bell," says Tim Maylowney, "I'd dayscribe ye in a worrud now that'd do me a power of good to mention," he says.

"Why don't ye say it to yer rotten ould cart?" roared me gran'father, comin' muddy up out of the ditch.

Tim flared up imayget at this belittling of his share of the honor. "No!" he says. "But I'll say it to the wooden-headed omadhaun with the thick fingers who

was dhrivin' the cart," says he. "Or maybe I'd say it to Anthony an' Clayopathra, yer pair of common nanny goats that's pullin' the cart," says he.

"You know well, Tim Maylowney, I'm in a state of sinless grace bekase of hauling the bell," says me gran'father, thremblin' all over with rage. "But I hope I'll not be tomorrow," says he, "and thin I'll make surgent's worruk of ye, you slandherin' blaggard ye," says he.

For a minute, the two stood barking at each other, and there's no knowin' how the argyment would have inded if Danny O'Brien's empty cart hadn't druve up at the moment. Danny gingerously offered to bring help from the nearest smithy, and bring it he soon did. But do their best endayvor, there wor four hours' delay before the cordage again got on its creaking way.

Aggrwaytin' as was this mishap, sure it was nothin' but a necessary pruperation for the rale misfortin' which was yet in store. And the place set for that misfortin' was no less a place than Paddy Carroll's public house, two miles this side of the village of Killgillam, an' tin dark, lonesome miles from their own waiting Ballinderg.

The clouds had been gathering dark and threatening all afthernoon, and the night swept up with a rush and a roar. Afther only tin minutes of warning twilight, the world grew black as yer hat. The stumbling horses could barely kape the road. And thin, while the wind was whistling a doleful chune through the hedges, flash— a blaze of lightning flung high the hills. The two hayroes braced thimselves for the stunning thunder crash, and well they did, for whin the clap came, it almost bate them flat. Imagetely afther, there crashed and roared just wolley afther wolley of deafening thunder, and thin the rain, the smothering rain— Noah himself would have been dhrownd by it.

What would have become of the parsecuted beneyfacthors I don't know, only that a bend in the road brought them the first sign of cheer. Just ahead through the slantin' rain shivered low near the ground the one gleamin' yellow eye of Paddy Carroll's inn. Whin the cart jolted into the tavern yard, Phil O'Connor, Paddy Carroll's red-headed hostler boy, answering Maylowney's doleful call, led the dhraggled ponies back to the mangers, while our two disappinted hayroes, dhrenched and shiverin', hurried into the tavern kitchen. As luck would have it, the corned beef was still smokin' hot on the table and the beautiful perfume of the biled cabbage filled all the house. Tin minutes afther, there wasn't a smudgin' of corned beef left in Carroll's tavern and only a fistful of biled cabbage was, for shame sake, left floating in the pot.

Just afther they were standin' in front of the fire, shaken' the water from themselves like two dhrowned huntin' dogs, and the rain was dashing furrous at the black windows, and Paddy Carroll at the bar was mixin' stiff noggins of hot Scotch, there broke so blindin' a flash of lightening that it med everything in the room dance green before their eyes, and in its wavering glare, they saw a great black coach dash past the windy. And, by the powers, on that same instant, the door swung open and if a tall dark sthranger dhressed like a lord didn' stand bowin' an' scrapin' on the thrashold.

So surprised and systounded was everybody that not a worrud was spoken until the sthranger, walkin' over and puttin' his back comfortable to the fire, says aisy and cajolin', "Landlord," he says, "I'm both wet and dhry; put some more turf on the fire to dhry me wetness, and give me a glass of your best to wet me dhryness, an' while yer about it, brew for this brace of foine scoundhrels here their heart's daysire."

While the three thravelers were sippin' their dhrink, friendly as yer plaze, an' Tim Maylowney was relaytin' the throuble they'd had with the bell, the red-headed hostler boy stuck a frightened face inside the door an', callin' Paddy Carroll over, whispered, "The coach an' horses must have sunk intil the ground. I can't find hide nor hair of thim!" he says, every flamin' hair brustlin'.

Without lookin' round, the sthranger spoke up. "Never mind thim," he says. "I sint them on a message to the village. They'll be back for me. Glasses round, landlord, and bring us a pack of cyards. I'll play yez for another round of dhrinks, juntlemen, that is, if yez understand how to play cyards," he says polite.

Paddy Carroll came near smotherin' with laughter.

Although me gran'father wondered over this well-dressed condaysintion, he never blinked an eye, but, keepin' a savare suppressing frown upon the grinning hostler boy, Phil, who was juggling a round table and three chairs into place, he sez, "It's seldom I touch the cyards, sir, and never with a sthranger. I'm that narvous of bein' chated," says he. "Still, as by the looks of the weather, we have a heavy hour upon our hands, and as yer honor seems so rayspectable a man, I'm willin' to take the chanct fer oncet."

Sure, he hadn't the worruds half out of his mouth whin the shameless Tim Maylowney was already in a chair, fumblin' careful and affectionate at a pack of cyards, as handy at floppin' them together as if he never had done any other sort of work in his life.

Me gran'father, with a rayluctant but raysigned air, sat down to the table; but no sooner had he touched the chair than he was half up to his feet again, for

never since the worruld was creayted had been seen such a pair of ears as those which brustled on the head of the sthranger. Although they had no hair on thim, d'ye mind, they were long and narrow and thrimmed up to a point and stood out like a bull terrier's.

"Dale the cyards," says the juntleman, greatly annoyed at me gran'father's spachless onpoliteness. "I'm a Boolgarian jook," he says, "an' where I come from, all my countrymen have ears like thim." Me gran'father sat down aisy again, but, do his best endavors, he couldn't keep his eyes from staring at that puzzling pair of Boolgarian ears.

Fair and aisy Maylowney dealt. The little cyards from the top of the pack fell to the sthranger, an' wondherful to raylate, all the big cyards, which some way happened to be on the bottom of the pack, fell to himself an' to me gran'father.

I needn't tell ye that the first game was over in a jiffy, an' that the dark man lost.

Me gran'father laned over an' said in a sootherin' way, "Ye had the Divil's own luck that time, sir."

"I had," says the jook. Wid that, for no rayson at all, he trew back his head and let a screech of laugh out of him that rattled the windys.

The punch was handed round, steaming hot.

"Have ye a toast?" says the jook.

"I have," says Maylowney, liftin' his glass. "Here's that we may all be in Heaven tuntyfour hours before the Divil knows we're dead."

"I'll not dhrink it," says the dark man, frownin' and layin' down his noggin.

"Whist! Tim, maybe the juntleman has a betther one," me gran'father says, cajolin'!

"I have," says the sthranger. "Such good company as this should have a friendlier toast. Here's that we three may soon meet again for betther and longer closer acquaintance."

Many an' many's the time aftherwards both me gran'father an' Tim Malowney would wake up in the night and fair shake the bed with their thremblin' at the raymimbrance of how careless an' free they swallyed down that toast. The two carters cooled their bowls, but, hot as it was, the jook threw his own down at one swolly and roared for another noggin.

To make a long story short, the second game was over as quick as the first, an' the third game was like it, but as the jook was picking from a fistful of silver the pay for the third round of dhrinks, he seemed to be very much vexed at his misfortune.

"Here," says he, in a blusterin' voice, shakin' the handful of money undher the nose of both of them. "Play me for this! I dare yez!"

For a moment, you could have heard a pin dhrop. Knowing well what was in store for the sthranger, Paddy Carroll, turned his back on the room quick, purtindin' to wind the clock, an' Phil O'Connor, whustling, wint over an' begun polishing the pewther as hard as he could; but all the time, aich of the two kept one merry eye over his showldher.

Me gran'father was sarchin' careful through a handful of shillin's an' pennies an' brass buckles an' horseshoe nails for a sixpence, and had just picked one out, when, happening to look up, he caught the scornful eye an' dishdainful smile of the dark sthranger fixed on the sixpence in his fingers.

The most raynowned thing always about the Murtaugh family has been their pride, and that same scornful smile lashed me gran'father like the cut of a whip. His face blazed red with raysentment, and without a worrud, he planked down in the center of the table buckles, nails, money, an' all— a matther of eight shillin's, and threepince ha'penny.

Tim Maylowney scraped anxious every pocket, but, sarch as he would, all he could find was five shillin's; he flung them to the table with the air of a lord.

"I'll put all this ag'inst the two of ye," the dark juntleman says, careless houlding up a fistful. "I haven't time to count it," says he, lettin' a silver rain of shillin's an' sispences slither through his fingers, until it hid and covered the threasure of the two carmen— nails, brass buckles, an' all. There must surely have been at laste four poun' tin in the pile. Paddy Carroll let fall the key of the clock, and Phil O'Connor, for want of breath, stopped whustlin'. So much money had never been bet on a game of cyards before in that tavern.

Well, me gran'father, his heart in his eyes, was watchin' Tim Maylowney fumblin' and fixin' careful the cyards (for it was Tim's dale oncet more), and the juntleman, with eyes shut, was lighting his poipe with a sthraw, careless an' slow and paying not a bit of attention to the game, whin me gran'father's conscience plucked him by the sleeve, and it whispered, "Ye're playin' for more than sixpence, and ye're chatin," says it.

Me gran'father turned fierce on his conscience, and he says to it, "Blur an' ages! I'm not chaytin! Isn't it Tim Maylowney that's daleing the cyards? Lave me alone! Are ye my conscience or are ye Mr. Tim Maylowney's? That's what I'd like to know." Without another worrud, he took up the cyards which had just been dealt to him, an' raisin' his right elbow as high as his showlder (a habit he had while runnin' the cyards over betwixt his forefingers and his thumbs), sudden

every dhrop of blood in his body rushed up to his head, for tare and 'ounds, there wasn't in his hand a single cyard higher nor the noine spot of clubs and— hearts were thrumps, and Tim himself, the artfulest dealer in Tipperary had dealt them to him.

He flashed a surprised and indignant glare over at Tim Malowney. But Tim sat looking at his own hand, with jaws dhroppin' and eyes bulgin,' starin' as though he were looking at a ghost.

A sickening fear pressed down on me gran'father, and he spread two fingers on the ind of his chin, which was a signal to Tim: "What is the highest cyard in yer hand?" and Tim, with the bewildered face of a man who had been trun from his horse an' is just pickin' himself up off the ground, crooked the third finger of his left hand, and that signal meant: "The highest cyard in me hand is the noine spot of spades."

But lo and behold! the sthrange jook, smiling and ca'm, led out with the ace of hearts and follyed it with the quane; an' he lathered me gran'father's noine spot of clubs with the knave, an' he murdhered Tim Malowney's noine of spades with the ten of thrumps. It wasn't a game at all— it was cowld-blooded murderous robbery, that's what it was.

An' while the juntleman was pullin' over the pile of silver, me gran'father, slow an' careful, raiched undher the table with his foot and med such a savage kick at Maylowney's shins that, if Tim hadn't guv a quick hist to his two legs, faith an' there was one carter who would have wint on crutches for the rest of his life. Before me gran'father could thry it ag'in, the sthranger spoke up jolly an' cajolin': "Oh, well, what's a few shillin's that I should beggar the loikes of you for the loikes of thim! Now listen! I'll give yez yer revenge. I'll put up every penny I've won from ye ag'inst— let's see, what have yez? Oh yes," he concluded, "ag'inst the hats on yer heads. Come, be quick, shuffle the cyards!"

It's no lie I'm tellin' ye! The sthranger won the hats on their heads; an' afther that, without losing a game, the jackets on their backs, their weskits, the brogues on their feet, and every stitch the two could afford to lose an' still go dacint.

And when the pair had put the clothes they had lost in a damp pile on the floor beside the sthranger and were sittin' miserable and shamefaced as a couple of plucked geese, aich in only his undershirt and a pair of knee breeches without stockings or brogues, what does the juntleman do but roar out laughing: "Ho! ho! ho! but yer a foine-lookin' pair!" he screamed, and the rafters shook. "Haven't yez anything else?" says he. But the carters shook their dhroopin' heads.

"Think now," cries the jook, "haven't yez any debts comin' to you? What do ye get for cartin' the bell outside?"

Me gran'father and Tim Maylowney exchanged one quick glance.

"Never mind what it is," says the sthranger ginerously. "By me sowl, I'll put everything I've won against yer wages for cartin' that bell."

In spite of his crushing misfortin', a grin spread over me gran'father's woebegone face, and without another worrud, the three hammered at it again, an' in less than a minute by the clock, the last game was played and the sthranger had won. The last cyard was barely on the table when the jook rose, lookin' very tall an' grand, and he says, "I'll not take yer clothes, though they're mine by right, nor yet yer money, but the music of the bell." (Now mind, no one had mintioned that to him, however he knew.) "The music of the bell," he says, "is mine, and that I'll keep."

As he spoke, there came the swirl and dash of horses in the road outside, and the great shining lamps of the same coach flared past the windys. With his hand on the latch, the jook turned about. "I'll see you all ag'in sometime," he says, "and whin that day comes"— he guv a most ojus smile—"by the powers, we'll have great goin's-on together."

With that— an' it's the thruth I'm tellin' ye— he disappeared through the door without opening it at all, and an unconthrollable shiver an' shudder doubled up everyone in the room, for by that wondherful disappearance, it was aisy known who they had been daleing with. The rain was over, an' the moon had come out in the sky, an' nothin' was left for me gran'father an' Tim but to hitch up Anthony an' Clayopathra an' purceed on their lonesome heavy journey back home.

I'll have yez to aymagine their turror an' disthress. It was three o'clock in the mornin' whin they druve undher the belfry at Ballinderg. Leaving the car with the bell still on it undher the belfry, me gran'father led his tired ponies home. An' it was the sore an' sorrowful luck they brought to Ballinderg. It's little ayther of the two benefactors slept that night.

## Part III

WELL, ANYWAY it happened, the next day in the afthemoon was no less a day than Saturday, an' the counthryside gathered about the black, solemn-looking bell where it lay in the cart. The big clapper was wrapped thick in fold after fold of cloth, for fear that, by accident, it might give a sthroke or two, and Father O'Leary had daycided that its first sound should call the people to church Sunday morning.

Afther much histin' an' "hu'hing" an' "ho-hoing"— even a long line of women an' childher put their hands to the ropes— the bell was lifted to the crossbeam, where Joey Hooligan, the smith, hammer in hand, sat straddling the beam, ready to rivet the treasure to its place. And whin Joey's last blow was sthruck, an' the bell swung free an' clear, a proud and jovial shout roused the listening fields. Be-gar, ye'd think someone had freed poor ould Ireland!

"Me childher," says Father O'Leary, turning about, an' the glow of a dozen wax candles seemed to be shining from the inside of his head through his face, "the wish that I have carried in me heart for thirty-one years is rayalized today. Ballinderg has a bell! And I appint Jerry Murtaugh and Tim Malowney to the honor of ringing the bell to call yez all to church tomorrow morning. For," says he with a sly smile, "since they own the music of the bell, by rights they should have its first bestowin'. Don't mind yer clocks, my childher, but start when ye hear the chime."

Everybody crowded round me gran'father an' Tim Maylowney, slappin' thim on the back an' sthrivin' to shake their hands. The hayros tried to be cheerful, but, in spite of all their strained laughin' an' cajolin', a heavy, brooding fear kept scorching their hearts about the dark sthranger an' the music of the bell.

That night, me gran'mother noticed her husband Jerry's throubled face at supper an' waited for him to explain. As he gave no worrud, she misdoubted he'd lost his money gambling, so she waited till the childher were in bed, thin she says to him quite an' aisy, "Where's all yer money, Jerry, agra?" Me gran'mother was surprised an' a thrifle disappointed when the good man dhrew from his breeches pocket eleven shillings tinpence— not a shilling missing. Afther takin' every penny away from the parsecuted man, what did she do but whirl in to cross-question him like a Dublin lawyer. She accused him sarcastic of every crime on the calendar, in the hope that she'd at last hit on the right one. It's little he'd ever say to her in rayply, but from the look on his face, one might think he was under sentence for murder and, weather permittin', would be hung bright an' early in the mornin'.

Little sleep did me unfortunate gran'father get that night ayther. An' every time his eyes closed, he was back on the instant in Paddy Carroll's public house. There was the dark sthranger again, but now, d'ye mind, covered with hair like a black goat, and he had a spiked tail on him as long as a carter's whip. The jook was always sitting at a table, shuffling a pack of cyards an' darin' me gran'father to play another game. For answer at last, me gran'father was siddlin' over to give him a good belt, when someone grabbed hould of the poor man an' tould him to

get up; it was time to be off to the chapel and ring the bell. "An' what's all this talk ye're havin' in yer sleep about Sattin, an' Paddy Carroll, an' the chapel bell?" axed me suspicious gran'mother.

Afther boultin' in spoonfuls of stirabout, me gran'father, with a face as long as your arrum, started off to the chapel, an' the wrinkled, worried visage Tim Maylowney brought along with him when the two met at the crossroads didn't elevate me gran'father's feelings in the laste.

"You haven't a minute to lose," cried Father O'Leary from the chapel steps. His smile was like a May day. "Isn't it a beautiful morning?" he says, sthriving to be calm. "Now to it, me lads, an' give us a ring that'll be heard over the mountain in Father Nale's parish." Throwing down their hats, the two carters took a good clutch on the rope an' pulled with all their might. And now came the first sign of the dark sthranger's worruk. For though the great bell swung gaily enough to and fro, the sorra sound came out of it any more than if it wasn't there. "Marcy on us, but that's quare," says Father O'Leary, coming forward. "Let me thry a hand with you."

An' thry he did. An' the three swayed an' swayed an' seesawed up an' down till they were red in the face, but the glowering bell only rolled and swung above their heads, sullen and silent as one of the tombstones nearby.

"Go into me stable and bring the ladder," panted Father O'Leary. "That rapscallion Joey Hooligan has done something amiss with the clapper. 'Tis his fault," says his riverence, mopping his forehead. Only too well the pair of carters guessed whose fault it was.

Well, the ladder was brought an' put ag'in the beam; and while me gran'father stidded it with both hands, Tim Maylowney mounted it to find out what was wrong. He'd climbed about halfway up whin, crack, goes the ladder in two in the middle, an' down comes Tim on the top of me gran'father, an' the two went thumping to the ground.

"The Divil's in it!" yelled me gran'father from somewhere undherneath Tim and the ladder, and at thim worruds— tis the truth I'm tellin' ye— the bell gave one loud, jovial clang an' thin stopped short. As the two benefactors struggled to their feet you may well believe every hair on their heads stood up with fright like brustles on a brush.

"One of yez go for that bliggard Joey Hooligan," says his riverence, "and tell him to bring his tools an' a ladder. As it is, we're tunty minutes late," says he, lookin' first rueful at his watch, thin at his broken ladder.

So off me gran'father hurries to the smith's house, half a mile down the Kilcuney road, and as luck would have it— or maybe as Beelzebub had managed— Joey was away; he had gone over to doctor for a cracked heel, Cornaylia, Mrs. Regan's cow; an' she lived a half a mile across the fields. In the meantime, the whole parish of Ballinderg was sitting impatient within their doors, wondhering what was keeping the bell. A dozen of the neighbors had gathered around Mrs. Morrissey's clock to time the bell, bekase it was the most raynowned and rayputable clock in the whole parish.

Mrs. Morrissey was lookin' rayproachful at the clock, blamin' it for being fast, and the systounded clock was ticking as plain as plain could be—"Oh murdher! Oh murdher! What's the matther with the infudels? Why don' they go to church?"— whin Tim Maylowney came galloping breathless and frightened to the door.

"Out, all of yez," cried he. "The bell's broke. Scatter among the neighbors and warn them off to church. Ye're half an hour late."

'Twas in this way the bell scored its first great victory; it made everybody in Ballinderg late for church that Sunday morning.

## Part IV

YOU MAY BE SURE the neighbors needed no second warning. Scatter they did, an' pretty soon the whole parish came sthrealing along, one afther the other, like Darcy's cows. Winding up the hill, they came to where poor Father O'Leary stood despairing undher the belfry.

"It's a punishment, me childher," he says piteous, fumbling with his withered hands. "Take warning! It's a punishment for me sin of pride and glorification over the grandeur of the things of this worruld. Oh, what'll we do at all, at all!— Is that you, Joey Hooligan, you bliggard? What have ye done to the clapper of the bell? Ye've spiled it, that's what ye've done," he cried out to the smith, who was burring up the road with me gran'father, an' they carryin' a ladder betwixt thim.

"I haven't spiled it," says Joey stoutly. "Whin I fastened the bell up yesterday, the tongue wagged back and forth as free an' ready as the tongue of"— he looked about for a comparison—"as the tongue of Mrs. Morrissey there. Stand aside, an' let me put up the ladder till I have a look!" says he.

You may believe me or believe me not, an' I wouldn't blame yez a thimbleful if you didn't— bekase foive hundred men, women, and childher that day rayfused at first to believe their own ears— but it's the truth I'm tellin' ye. Joey Hooligan had no sooner put his foot on the first round of the ladder than the bell, without a

hand to the rope, began, not ringing, mind you, but chiming. An' not exactly chimin' ayther, but playin' a chune to the open eyes an' gapin' mouths of Ballinderg.

It was the purtiest chune ever heard. Stirring an' sweet an' urgent. Some way it med one think of the beating of drums an' the clashing of swords, an' of sojers marching out to die.

"Oh!" gasped Father O'Leary. "The Marshal Aise." He covered his eyes with his hands to shut out some vision, an' his face wint gray as the stones.

"The Marshal Aise! The Marshal Aise!" The word was picked up and tossed from one person to another to the furthest varge of the crowd. Sure wasn't that the identical song Father O'Leary heard in the sthreets of Paris whin he was a student there! They played it while they were massacreein' the 'ristocrats an' the clargy.

"O God, have marcy on their sowls!" half-whuspered the good man. "I can see now the gentlest an' the bravest being dragged up to the headsman; an' two of the best an' the thruest friends I ever had smiled goodbye to me from the crowded tumbril!"

Overcome with the raycollection, the priest stopped a moment and thin, lifting to the sky his two hands, cried, "Oh, may the deep curse of Heaven"— he caught himself quick. "What am I sayin'? A minister of God! May God forgive them an' me, too."

Lookin' wistful around, he saw me gran'father's white, scared face with the big dhrops of purspuration standin' on it.

"Don't be frightened, Jerry agra," he says, thremblin'. "There's nothin' at all shupernatural about the bell. We live so far out of the worruld here that we know nothing of the wonderful invintions that are springing up among men like new grass in the meadow. I make no doubt this is one of thim; an' that there's some hidden conthrivance up above the clapper we haven't noticed, an' don't undherstand, that makes the bell ring so. I'll ask Father Murphy about it tomorrow. Oh, mush, mush, you rose-grown hedges an' vine-dhressed hills of France, how far away you've flown! God help us! Come in to yer prayers, good people," he says, broken. "Come in to yer prayers!"

'Twas a sober an' a solemn crowd that afther church wandhered home in groups together, debaytin' an' disputin' as they wint, for the mystification of the congregation led to thraymendous disputaytion.

But nayther me gran'father nor Tim Maylowney joined in the argyfyin' crowds, for well they knew that Sattin, by means of the bell, had timpted even Father

O'Leary himself to the sin of hathered an' rayvenge. Off to thimselves together the two slunk, like men who had committed a saycrit crime. When the pair were well out of hearing of anyone else, me gran'father says, bitther, "Well, Maylowney, ye done it this time. What with yer love of the cyards, and yer fondness for pickin' up with sthrangers, ye've been the complate ruinaytion of my repitaytion and the repitaytion of Ballinderg."

The tongue of Malowney was so hot with indignaytion at the whole blame bein' trun on him this a-way that all he could do was to sputther, "Why, thin, bad manners to ye for a slandherous bosthoon! Weren't ye with yer winks an' yer nods as deep in the mud as I was in the mire?"

"That's nayther here nor there," says me gran'father, coolly waving him away. "Wasn't it you that first planked yerself down at the table before I had a chanst to daycline the jook's inwitation? An' isn't it you that is always a timptation to play with sthrangers, for if ye weren't along, how could I chate thim? It's you that knows well how aisy led I am.

"But heigh-ho, cryin' over spilt milk'll do no good. We've only now to save ourselves an' our repitaytions. Tim, me dacint lad, dhrive down at break of day to Paddy Carroll's an' warn him not to breathe a blessed worrud of what's happened. He's as bad off as we are. Wasn't it himself as had Beelzebub for a customer, an' wasn't it him as let the pair of us be timpted?"

"I would go willingly," answered Tim, "for I make no doubt the bell'll begin its depredaytions foine an' airly Monday mornin', an' what we've just heard will be only a flay bite to what'll happen thin. But," he sez, rubbin' his chin rueful, "you remimber me cousin, Nellie Grogan, is to be married the morn, an' it's needful that all her relaytions should be there to give her rayspect— she's had such har-rd luck with her young men, poor girl. I needen't tell you that when, three years ago, Ned Kerrigan disappinted her and slipped off to be a sojer two days before the weddin', 'twas a cruel blow enough, but whin young McCarthy, the year afther, took the Quane's shillin' within a week of their marriage, the poor lass almost lost courage. Now, thin, thanks be, she's within a day of her weddin' to Shamus McCormick, an' it will never be said that I, the most rayspected of her ralaytions, will rayfuse to ornament the occasion. No, I couldn't think of it; besides, Mrs. Maylowney'd be sure to prevent me from goin' away, no matther how much I wanted to," he sighed.

So the long an' short of it was me gran'father consinted to go to Paddy Carroll's, with the undherstandin' that Tim should be waitin' for him in Anthony

an' Clayopathra's stable in the evening to make known all that had happened during the course of the day.

At that, the two downcast conspyrators separated, aich to put in the longest Sunday afthernoon of his life.

Every minute of the day, his conscience was a burnin' coal in me gran'father's chest, an' to add aggrawaytion an' turpitation to his misery, the poor man couldn't cross a foot or crook an elbow but he'd feel me gran'mother's two suspicious eyes boring a hole in the middle of his back. Worse than all, he dhreaded the night bekase of an unforchunate habit he had of talkin' in his sleep, and well he knew— for she'd often done it before— that me gran'mother would lay wide awake as an owl to catch every whusper. Women haven't the laste taste of honor about such things. But go to bed he did, and at last into onaisy slumber he fell, but not for long. When he caught me gran'mother asleep and before the sun had a chanst to shake his scarlet jacket above the hill, me gran'father with Anthony an' Clayopathra wor well on their way toward Paddy Carroll's public house.

## Part V

TIM MAYLOWNEY was right in his prophesying. Bright an' early Monday morning, the bell began its divilment, and, of course, who should it commence on but Pether McCarthy, the most sinsitive man in the County Tipperary? So suspicious of intintions to insult him was Pether all his life, that one couldn't safely raymark the toime of day in his presence without danger of having the sayin' caught up as an underhanded rayflection on Pether himself or on some of his raylations. But sure, nobody ever thought of insulting the poor man, for the only thing that could be whispered against his charackther was a rumor that an uncle of his father's down in the County Cork— the McCarthy's were all ab-originally Corkonians— was thransported to Van Di'man's Land for stayling sheep.

So now, in the early mornin', as the honest man started for his worruk in the fields, the black wuzzard up in the belfry tower spies him, an' what does the ould target do but sthrike up playin' an ancient, well-known chune called "The Sheep-Stayler's Lament."

Well, at the sound, poor Pether stood pathrayfied in his thracks. Could it be that Father O'Leary himself was making game of him? He gave one wild, horrified look at the belfry up on the hill, hesitated an instant, thin turned ag'in an' hurried back to his house. The unmannerly rapscallion of a bell kept time to his steps with

the beat of the chune, an' never let up till the door closed behind Pether— when it stopped suddint! McCarthy waited a little, thin cautiously opened the door, but no sooner had he stuck out his head than the maylodious sthrains of "The Sheep-Stayler's Lament" was heard in every field and cottage for two miles around. That squelched him. The poor lad ventured out no more till he spied from his windy, some two hours afther, the wedding purcession of Nellie Grogan windin' up the hill to the chapel. Bad as was the thratement Pether McCarthy rayceived, it was bread an' treacle to the outrageous welcome that awaited the poor bride.

At the head of the purcession, by course, walked Nellie and the groom, while close behind marched Tim Maylowney and his wife, Honoria. In spite of having to wear a neckerchief that was stranglin' him, Tim, the poor man, was thryin' to look happy an' unconsarned, though 'twas himself had the feeling that there was trouble enough an' to spare watching for thim all in the belfry on the top of the hill.

But if Tim was unsartin an' worried, not so with his cousin Nellie, the bride. She laned on the arm of Shamus an' smiled up at him proud an' happy as a June rose.

The neighbors stood in the doorways along the road, waving good wishes at the happy pair, never so much as mentioning to each other the two miscrayants who had run away and left the disappinted bride behind them, all for no better rayson than for the bit of temper that was born in her.

Jokin' an' cavortin' an' with ribbons fly in', the happy party arrived at the foot of the hill lading up to the churchyard, and as they did, the runny-gate in the tower broke loose. An' what chune of all paralyzin' chunes did the desparaydo sthrike up loud an' rollickin' but "The Girl I Left Behind Me"!

At first, ye'd think a piece of the sky had fallen, so great was the sudden wondher. Howandever, no one sthopped, but they marched timidly on while the bell kept playing the insult gay an' cheerful, almost spakin' the worruds:

*They dhressed me up in scarlet clothes,*
*They used me very ki-i-ndly,*
*But I'll never forget the purty little girl,*
*The girl I left behi-i-nd me.*

Maylowney stood it as long as he could, but at the churchyard gate, he halted an' shook his fist at the bell. Whether 'twas bekase the party were enterin' the churchyard or bekase of Tim's dayfiance will never be known, but, as Tim did so,

the bell changed its chune into the mournfulest toll that ever was heard. Every toll'd raise the hair from yer head— 'twas that fearsome.

Flesh and blood could stand no more. With wild shrieks and yells, the purcession broke an' run for their lives. Shamus didn't run, though hard he thried. Mrs. Maylowney, coolheaded woman that she was, had stepped up an' caught him by the arrum; an' while she grippin' him on one side an' Nellie on the other, what betther could he do but race up to the chapel and inside with thim? An' so the day was saved for Nellie.

Outrageous as was all this, sure it was only the beginning of the troubles for Ballingerg. The wuzzard insulted half the parish. He played "The Rogue's Mar-rch" for Wullum Duff, the schoolmaster, keepin' time to his steps whether fast or slow—"Rum-te-tum-rum, re-tum rum-te-rumpty rum, te-tum"— an' whin at last Wullum, beside himself with mortification, broke into a mad run, it med no difference; the music kep' time with him just the same. The schaymer played "The Divil's Hornpipe" even for pious ould Mrs. Donovan as she limped slowly by on her cane, an' sthrive as she would an' thry as she could, she had to keep step to it.

The consthernaytion an' fear an' excitement that day were so great in Ballinderg that by foive o'clock in the afthernoon, there wasn't a sowl to be seen abroad. Everybody was indoors listening to find out who'd be scandalized next, when sudden the bell sthruck up, glorious an' beautiful, "Lo, the Conquering Hayro Comes".

On the minute, every door and windy flashed open, so great was the curosity to know who it was that the ould targer of a barbariyan would be showin' such honor and rayspect to. Me gran'mother stuck her head out with the rest, an' what should she see comin' bobbin' along the brow of the hill but Anthony an' Clayopathra, an' sittin' calm an' peaceful behind thim— me gran'father!

Me gran'mother waited for no more, but, throwing her shawl over her head, hurried off on her way to Mrs. Maylowney's for informaytion an' advice— there was always great sociology betwixt the two families— an' who should she meet up with in the lane, hastenin' down to see her on the same errand, but Mrs. Maylowney herself?

"It's comin' up to your own house I was, Honoria, to spake to ye about me husband, Jerry," sez me gran'mother afther the time o' day was passed betwixt thim, "an' to ink-wire whether yez have obsarved anything out of the common about yer own honest man, Tim, I dunno."

Mrs. Maylowney trew back her head an', liftin' her two hands, guv the air a hard push.

"Arrah, thin, don't be talkin'," sez she. "Wasn't I on me way to ax the same question of yerself? Isn't me heart broke worryin' over him, an' ain't me two eyes almost fallin' out of me head from watchin' him? And as for scoldin' and beratin' him, I get no comfort out of it at all, at all, for he won' answer back, and I have a fear on me that I can't express, that Sattin himself is in the bell above, an' that our brace of foine husbands have more than a little to do with it." Me gran'mother hilt her apron to her mouth an' shook her head despairing: "Oh, oh, sorra's the day! What'll we do at all, at all?"

Now that was a foolish question entirely, for what did anyone do for miles around who had a fear or a heartache or any sort of throuble but bring that sorrow up to Father O'Leary? An' there, by the same token, did the two good women take thimsilves, though sore ashamed they were to turn informers that a-way ag'in their own husbands.

Manewhile, Tim, as good as his worrud, was scrooged, waiting in the stable ag'in me gran'father's return; an' whin at last the ponies had been fed an' dhressed down, with dhry lips Tim towld me quakin' ansisther, faithful an' complate, all the outrageous doin's of that raymarkable day, an' sittin' down on the tub beside me gran'father, his chin in his hands, he wound up his conversation by sayin', "Oh, begora, this'll be a lesson to me the remaynder of me days. I'll never touch another dhrop of dhrink ag'in so long as I live, an' I'll never look at another cyard till the day of me death, an' as for bad company—" he groaned, clinchin' his two fists.

"As for bad company," me gran'father says, thinkin' gloomy an' raysentful of Sattin, "I'll never meet— Oh, by the powers!" he says, jumpin' up, "is it me ye're callin' the bad company, Tim Maylowney?"

What answer Tim would have med will never be known, for at the instant, a shadow darkened the stable door, an' lookin' up, who should they spy standin' solemn an' savare before thim but Father O'Leary himself! The pair thried to splutther a civil greeting, but for rayply, his riverence crooked a finger, first at me gran'father, thin at Tim Maylowney, beckonin' thim to folly. An' the two culprits, like retrievers at heel, follyed the clargyman up to his house. Only oncet on that doleful journey did me gran'father spake, an' thin it was to whusper a warnin' to his comerad: "Whatever he does till yez, kape yer tongue in her head."

"No fear," whuspered Tim, an' his voice was as hoarse as the say.

Whin they arrived at the priest's house, the first thing Father O'Leary did was to put me gran'father into the study, turn the kay in the door, an thin, takin' Tim by the showlder, he led the unfortunate man into a room across the hall.

The clargyman pushed Tim into a chair, an' sitting himself in another close ferninst, with hands on knees, Father O'Leary fixed an eye on Tim that dug to the very bottom of the squarmin' wictim's overflowin' sowl.

For foive long minutes, not a sound was heard except the cracklin' of the twigs on the hearth.

Tim, perched on the edge of his chair, wondhered if this was going to last forever. He twisted his cap round and round in his finger, coughed polite into it, and looked out the windy. He put the cap on his head, quick snatched it off ag'in and dhropped it on the floor, stared despairin' at the picture of Dan'l O'Connell over the mantel, and wished that he had the courage of that great man, but all the time feelin' himself skewered by Father O'Leary's raylentless eye.

Whin there was no more strength or courage left in his body than there is in a suckin' pig, he says in a wake voice, "It's gettin' dark, an' it's goin' to rain. I think I'll be goin' home."

Father O'Leary nodded stern an' accusing an', lanin' back in his chair, spoke slow and pinted: "I heard yer whuspered promise to that bliggard Jerry Murtaugh, as we came along, an' I'll not ask ye to break it; but tell me one thing only," says he. "Was it your fault, or was it his?"

"It was Jerry's fault, yer riverence," says Tim, givin' a great gulp of raylief at gettin' out of it so aisy. "Sure, your riverence knows well that I—"

"That's enough," says Father O'Leary, rising. "You stay in that chair, an' never lave this room till I call you."

You may aymagine the condition of me gran'father, sittin' alone in the study during all this while, sore disthracted to know what was goin' on in the room across the hall. He strained his ear to listen, but divil a sound could be heard, and he'd half med up his mind that his comerad Tim must be sthrangled dead whin the door opens and Father O'Leary pops in on him.

"Jerry Murtaugh," says the priest, lookin' sore put out, "it's surprised an' scandalized at ye I am! To think of me blamin' the poor lad across the hall whin all the while 'twas your fault."

"My fault!" yelled me gran'father, jumpin' to his feet. "Who said it was my fault?"

Father O'Leary nodded stern an' a-cusing. "I've Tim Maylowney's word for it," he said. "What have you to say ag'in it?"

Me gran'father let such a roar out of him that Tim Maylowney, concludin' thin an' there that his comerad was bein' kilt, lept out of the windy an' raced down the Kilcuney road, an' never stopped till he raiched home.

"Did the slandherin' villain say the loikes of that?" says me furious ansisther. "Now listen to my side of the story, and I'll have ye to judge."

An' what does me gran'father do but up an' tell the whole thransaction from beginning to end, just as it happened.

As Father O'Leary listhened, he passed from onbelief to inkerdulity, from inkerdulity to wondher, an' from wondher to conwiction, an' thin he put three pinances for their terrible sins on Tim Maylowney an' me gran'father. An' these punishments wor to last them for the rest of their natural lives. The first pinance was to give up cyard playin' complate an' intirely; the next was that they should taste no sthrong dhrink, save an' except one noggin of punch to be dhrunk on Saturday night, aich beside his own wife an' ferninst his own fireside. These two were hard enough, you'll agree, but the third and last was the killin' pinance entirely, and it was no less than that they must save their money and not to spend it foolish.

"Oh, thin, ye're the flinty-hearted man, Father O'Leary," cried me gran'father whin he heard the pinance. "Why don't ye turn me into a chiney image at once and have done with it! To think that I must suffer this away, an' the black schoundhrel that is to blame for it is swingin' free up in the tower, making' game of us all."

"Ha!" says Father O'Leary with a wise nod. "Lave him to me! Tomorrow morning I'll fix that lad. I'll fasten him a presner in the bell till the day of judgment, and every time the bell rings, the clapper'll pelt him betwixt the two showlders. It's a sore back the schaymer'll have on the last day, I'll warrant ye," chuckled his riverence.

Well, the worruds weren't well out of his mouth when there came a crash of tunder an' a flare of lightning. Me gran'father waited for no more. With a hurried "Good-night, yer riverence!" he took the road in his hands. There was barely time to raich his own good door whin the memor-iable Big Wind began to blow.

Sure, the worruld knows how it tore up threes by the roots, whirled houses through the air, an' druve saygoin' ships up on the Kerry shore, where it left them perched up on the rocks like so many saygulls.

You understand, of course, that all this was bekase Beelzebub, furious with the disappintment at bein' driven from the bell, was sthrivin' to daystroy the Irish Nation. An' the fear of Father O'Leary's threat was on the vagobone, too, for next

mornin', the bell was gone, an' the neighbors say how, in the night, inwisible hands must have carried it through the air, an' thin dashed it down upon the great flat rock in Hagan's meadow; for there it lay broken into a thousand pieces, an' the stone itself was busted in two.

That was the last of Sattin and the bell.

But as for me gran'father an' Tim Maylowney, they kept their pinance well. Howandever, they had made special, d'ye mind, two pewther noggins which held a full quart aich, and these the two hayros'd sit an' sip, side by side, on Saturday nights. Many's the winther evening I've seen them there, an many's the toime I've heard them tell this story beside that same fire.

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## 3: The Sheep Stealer

WE HAVE no raley criminal crimes now down in this part of Tipperary. We believe that locks on dures bring bad luck. There doesn't hang a lock on a dure in the townland of Ballinderg but one, and that an ould ancient padlock half the size of one's head, with a rusty kay sticking out of it as thick as me finger, that lies in the clasp of the latch on the forge dure of Joey Hooligan, the smith. It hangs there yet as a wondher and as a curiosity.

If any art or object ever brought bad fortune to a man, that same lock dhrew down ill luck in the Hooligan family and, at the same time, spiled the repitation and siled the glory of the town of Ballinderg. Where he got it I don't rightly raymimber, but me mind some way misgives me that he took it for pay for shoeing a horse that was belonging to a thraveling tinker.

More than twunty years ago, the night of Christmas Eve itself above all nights in the year for such a unhappy thing that the crime was purpetrated, and if yer honor cares to listen, I'll till yez the story from beginning to ind, while the pony is dhragging us up this long hill ferninst us.

There's some do be saying to this day that the Fairies wor mixed up in the thransaction, but as I'll aylucidate to yez now, the Good People had no more hand in that same crime than yerself or meself or the pony there. It's many a charge of stayling cattle and butther and fowls is left to the Good People, so that I believe hardly half I hear agin them anymore. Maybe as I grow old, I'm getting shuperstitious. I don't believe half the ghost stories I hear these days ayther.

Well, as I was saying: If a person stayles a cow or a horse or money or anything like that, the guilt and the disgrace of it rests only on himself and his childher. Many a dacint man has committed murdher. Mild as I look this minute, taking all the length of me days together, I dare say I've kilt in cowld blood no less than fifty people. I've kilt Jimmy Carroll that keeps the public house in Carrickton not less than tin times in the last two years for slighting the feed in me horse's manger and for putting rain water in me own whiskey. Of course, it's only in me own mind I've kilt them, but Father Cassidy says a sin of the intention is as black as a sin of the hand, and the only difference is that, in the one case, the police aren't botherin' you. Well, to me mind, that makes a raymarkable dale of difference.

There was a great thraveler once tould me that in some parts of England, a man is counted great by the number of sheep he has purloined, but in this

counthry of Ireland, to stayle a sheep is the most dayspicable, unforgivable crime mentioned in the Tin Commandments. It lasts as a rayproach on his daycendents, down to and including his fourth cousins, and his ancestors must hang their heads at the mention of his name back to the time of the flood.

If the ould saying stands thrue that the darkest hour is just before the dawn, doesn't it as often come out that the merriest, lightest-hearted minutes turn into the sudden forerunners of black misfortune?

Well anyway, that's how it came about that the merriest night in the lives of Joey Hooligan, the big, giant smith, and of his wife, Nancy, and of his eight purty childher changed to a miserable and bitter memory on Christmas morning twunty years ago.

That night, the four rooms in the cottage glowed with candles. Nancy had been moulding them in all sizes during a month past. A big candle stood in every corner, and one as tall as Nancy herself and as thick as yer wrist beckoned and laughed at every windy. A fire of sea coals in the big grate sent a thousand gleams cavorting and glinting to the dishes on the dhresser, to the shiny tin pans on the walls, and intil the eyes and hearts of the childher as they romped and roared and galloped about the cottage.

Joey, like all big, strong men, was slow of speech and solemn of mind. "Nancy," he whispered to his wife, "I'm so happy tonight, I'm almost afeared."

The center of all the play and divorsion was Blackie, the pet lamb. Sure it's almost like one of the childher, the young baste carried on. They put a nightcap on the black head of him, and you could hear Joey himself roaring half a field away when Poudeen showed how much the lamb raysembled long-faced Julius Callaghan; and when they put a fur cap over the sheep's ears, the childher rowled helpless on the floor, laughing and shrieking at the way Blackie raysembled solemn-faced Maurteen Cavanaugh, the schoolmasther. Well, it was nothing but fun and noisy merriment for the childher and hugs and twistings and caresses for Blackie till Eileen, the youngest of the childher, worn out from very happiness, dhropped asleep undher the table. That was a sign that the happy Christmas Eve was spent. Joey tied the cord about Blackie's neck.

The smithy fronting the road stands, as ye may see, half a stone's throw from the cottage, and it was in a box filled with sthraw hard by the forge fire that the little pet med his bed.

"Isn't Tim Malowney, the carman, coming to ye early in the morning for a shoe to go on the horse's foot?" asked Nancy.

"Bad manners to him, but he is! Christmas morning and all," answered the smith, stopping on the threshold. The lamb was frisking and bunting at Joey's knees in its hurry to be off to bed.

"Wait a bit!" called Nancy. "He'll be opening the forge door in the morning before you're out, and that villain of a sheep'll get away and keep us the whole day hunting him, as he did last fortnight."

Joey nodded and stepped into the dark, but he called back, "I'll twist the kay in the lock so Malowney can't be opening it."

The sheep darted from the smith's hand into the shop at the smithy door, and Joey stood for a minute to look at the wondherful night. He was the kind of man who felt things instead of thinking them. A sift of snow, dhry and light as flour, had just began to fluther down from a sky that hung so low that one'd aymagine he could almost raise up and touch it with a long stick. A pack of blaggard grey clouds were hunting a frightened grey moon to its shelter on the Sleive-na-mon Mountains. Joey looked up and down the clear road. Everything waited, still as death, except that, far as sound could raich, the dogs were barking. He raymimbered afterwards how, for a second, the shadow of a man seemed to stir just undher the big oak across the way. Afar over the fields, happy lights still twinkled in neighbors' windows. When he looked back to the oak three again, no shadow stirred at all, so he blamed the ould age in his eyes.

Then he turned to padlock the closed dure. But the kay, bekase of the rust, wouldn't budge for all the famous strength of the Hooligan fingers. For a full minute, he tugged and he twisted; he bit his lip, and he braced his heels, but bad manners to the creak the kay gave. "I must get the wrench," he muttered. It was only till all the strength of his great arm got on the wrench that the kay turned and the dure locked. While he worked, there crept a queer, uneasy feeling in his bones that someone very evil or very miserable was watching him. He took the wrench with him intil the kitchen for use on the morrow's morn.

It was a sthrange, wondherful thing for Joey Hooligan, the smith, not to be able to sleep. He hadn't his like in seven counties for snoring. Most times, his thrumpeting would be rattling the tin pans on the walls while Nancy wouldn't have finished threatening the giggling childher into quiet. But tonight of all nights, for some hidden rayson, Joey couldn't shut an eye. Long afther the cottage was so still that the click of the clock sounded daystinct as the hit of a hammer, he rowled and he turned his head as hot as a new baked loaf of bread.

Once he could have sworn that sly fingers thrifled with the dure latch, but listening close, the sound didn't come again. The head of his bed lay right up

against the windy-sill. At last, just as the worn-out man was beginning to doze, something tapped softly on the windy-pane above his head. He lifted himself to his elbow and parted the windy curtains. Nothing at all! The full moon, stopped in her flight, shimmered down a flood of shplendor.

Already the snow had stopped filtering down. Only a half inch or an inch or so had fallen, but it covered, quiet and sparkling, the meadows, the glistening branches of the trees, and the far roofs of the neighbors' cottages. The restfulness and the beauty stole soothering in on him, so that he must have fallen asleep as he looked, for it seemed to him only a few minutes afther that Nancy poked him in the ribs and said, "Get up; it's late. Tim Maylowney'll be at the door. Get up till I fix the gifts and the breakfus' for the childher."

With no one on the outside to push it along, a new idea thraveled a long hard journey before it was able to get undher the thatch of Joey Hooligan's great tangle of black hair. His long leather apron hung on a nail that was in the wall just over Blackie's bed. The smith stood a minute, thumbing with his stiff apron strings, all the time staring down at the empty sthraw, mind ye, and never till he'd just turned to give a pump at the bellows did he hould his hand to say, "Tare an' ages, what's become of Blackie?"

Then, for another few minutes, he stood pumping the bellows and searching with puckered brows under the shelves and benches into the shadowy corners of the room. "Well, on my sowl, I think the baste is gone! Now that's quare," he says. "I shut the dure careful when I came in, so he couldn't scoot past me. He couldn't melt away like a crock of butther, could he?"

At that, in his heavy way, the puzzled man began to rayson.

"I'd say maybe," he went on, "that he broke a pane of glass and jumped out the windy, but how could he, since there never was a windy in the smithy from the hour me gran'father built it? Then how could be break a pane of glass in the windy if there wasn't any glass or any windy?"

He bent, peering afther the curl of blue smoke that was darting up the wide chimney.

"If it was coming into the place Blackie was, I'd say it's down the chimney he might have lepped, even if he'd be smothered in the live coals that wor laying all night on the forge hearth. But as for climing up the chimney, I'd dayfy any baste in Ireland to do it. No it must be the dure. But who in Ireland's ground could have twisthed the kay in that dure?"

The new idea by this time had got well in its home behind Joey's puckered forehead.

"I'll have a look at the dure," he said, "and the thracks in the new fallen snow'll till what way he wint."

Only an inch of snow lay on the ground. Except the marks of Joey's own brogues, not a trace or a thrack of human or of baste showed in the soft, white carpet. Hands locked behind and body bent, Joey was searching about outside the smithy, when his wife, Nancy, came, too. One by one, the childher came out and joined the search. Out in the high road, not a wheel had passed during the night, nor lay there a footstep of man or baste or even of fowl.

Blackie had never come out of the forge on his four visible feet, nor had any flesh-and-bone feet carried him. What had come to him? Of all the mysteries of the world, was there a bate of this one?

"Go in to yer horseshoeing. Here comes Maylowney. Say nothing. It's no use looking farther. Don't yer see who took him?" Nancy whispered, pulling at his sleeve.

But Joey the smith lifted his great fist to the sky and shook it at the clouds.

"Now may the curse"— he was beginning to say when his wise wife put her hands on his lips.

"Are ye mad, Joey Hooligan?" she warned. "Don't anger them. Don't ye know well that it's one of the childher itself they might be taking next for spite. They have the lamb— they're welcome. Maybe they have more nade for it than we. Good luck to them!"

My, but the Hooligans were sore-hearted!

For a good week, the parish searched high an' low, but nayther hide nor hair of the baste was ever seen again. So complete, so suddint, an' so mystarious had been the taking that the wisest heads in the townland settled down to the unanswerable conclusion that no human thief at all had taken Blackie, but that the poor little crachure had been a-pro-pry-ayted by the Good People. Not that anyone was bould enough or foolish enough to say as much aloud. As everyone knows, if the Fairies carry away a cow or a pig or, say, a couple of ducks, the laste said, the soonest mended. If you go raising any ructions with the Good People, maybe out of spite, it's one of yer childher they'd next be afther taking with them to their home in Sleive-na-mon.

Howandever, one stormy morning, a matther of five or six weeks afther, when a crowd of neighbors purty well filled the smithy, and they idling the time with their pipes and their jokes and their chat, Joey himself suddenly laid down the horse's hoof he was houlding and, rubbing his hands hard and scowling around at them, said a thing that they spread afther over the scandalized barony. No one at

all had been speaking of the misdaymeanor of taking Blackie, but Joey broke in: "I've an idea in me head," he says, "that the thief who stole my sheep never rode the wind at all," says he, "but walks in two brogues— and something in the back of me skull tells me that one day I'll lay me two livin' hands on him, an' when I do, God help him!"

And Pether McCarthy, looking at the width and the thickness of Joey's two grimed hands, says afther him, "If ye do, God help him. But 'tis in the heart of Sleive-na-mon Mountain yer sheep is being hid."

And Joey, in the folly and foolishness of his madness, burst out with a saying that sent a chill intil the heart of everyone who listened: "Then the curse of the crows light on them that took him and them that has him— man or immortal," says he.

For a good many weeks follying afther, the women of Ballinderg would sigh anxious at each other when anyone of the Hooligan childher'd be passing down the village street, and of a Sunday morning, the crowd of men gathered at the chapel steps would blink owl's eyes together and grow talkative as the stumps of dead threes when Joey jined in on the crowd.

Well, as the saying is, that throuble passed as all throubles must, an' it was a good foive months after that dismal Christmas Day before Joey Hooligan heard anything more of the sheep-staylin'. But whin he did get worrud of it, the bewildherin' news started the sleepin' mysthery into a roaring blaze.

This is how it came: One May mornin', the smith was alone at his worruk, whustling a chune, when who should come fast galloping down the road an' dhraw up, slap dash, at the forge door, but Terror, Father Cassidy's black hunther, and on Terror's back sat Father Cassidy himself.

"Come out, Joey Hooligan! Come out, me dacint man!" cries the priest, his voice hoarse with agytation.

At the call, the towering smith came to the door and stood there in his apron, gawpin', for the priest's face was in a blaze of excitement, an' the good man couldn't sit quiet on the horse's back.

"Hould out yer hand, me lad," says the clargyman. "Stretch it over here," he says.

An' thin, whin the smith put over his great, dusty paw, Father Cassidy dhropped intil the hard palm a fistful of shinin' silver.

A minute the good man stammered, for the words seemed hard set to force themselves from behind his teeth, while Joey, with wrinkled, bewildered forehead stared from the shinin' silver in his grimy hand to the face of the priest and from

that to the snorting excited nostrils of Terror and back again to the clump of money.

"There's the pay for yer sheep, an' with it, two crowns more than the pay," says his riverence. "The thief who stole Blackie sinds it, an' he humbly axes yer forgiveness, an' he begs God's pardon, too. I charge ye on yer conscience not to breathe a whusper of this to a livin' sowl," cautioned the priest. "Tut, tut, ye're to ax no questions," he says.

Joey Hooligan has a powerful mind, as everyone knows, only it worruks slow, as I tould ye; so Father Cassidy was off and away down as far as the Widdy Deegan's before the truth had wormed itself full length intil the smith's hard head. But whin the lad at last rayalized that no fairy at all had taken Blackie, but that some sneakin', murdher-hound of a rapscallion had stole his little colleen's pet lamb, an' that all the heartaches of his childher were med by some red-handed, unfeeling robber, thin it was that a wild fury sayzed the big smith, so that the surge of blood in his head dhrove the sight from his eyes. What was the money? Musha, wasn't he just crazy! He was fair conglomerated.

Smashin' his apron hard upon the floor, the lad charged down the road, follyin' Father Cassidy, shoutin' abuse an' wituperation ag'in the thief as he ran. You'd think, to see him, that 'twas ould Nick himself that was in it. All he wanted of Father Cassidy was to get from the priest the name of the malayfacthor. And so hot was this purpose in his heart that he paid no attintion to the people he mat up with on the way, but with his head lowered, he rushed heedless past thim down the road like a mad bull. Some thought the smith had gone daft, but Bothered Bill Donohue, the tinker, who had seen Father Cassidy ride away from the forge, spread the rayport that Hooligan was only doin' a hard pinnance put upon him by the priest, for not putting all the nails complete in the horse shoes. Maurteen Cavanaugh, the schoolmasther, shook his head sorrowful and said, "I always thought there was some kind of saycrit villany in that Joey Hooligan."

Well, anyways, the time I'm tellin' ye of, Joey ran on till he was halfway up to the mountains. There the lad's breath failed him, an' he sat down upon the stone by the lonely roadside, his head in his hands. Bime-bye, the anger cooled a bit so that, little by little, he began thinkin'. Sure it wasn't long, thin, till he raymimbered how the clargyman had put it hard on his conscience not to ax questions. At that raymimbrance, he wondhered an' he pondhered an' he mumbled an' he grumbled. But at the ind of all his osculaytions an' pondherations, he was only left where he began. His mind, so to speak, was up agin a stone wall, an' the mysthery having woke from its sleep famershinger than ever was once more atin' its fill

from the core of the smith's big, warm heart. So up he rose an' home he wint, an' the next morning found him at his worruk as before.

Not a word did he say to the childher, not a whisper to Nancy, his wife, although night and day for a fortnight she was twisting his heartstrings this way and that to find out the throuble that was on him. Many's the neighbor wondhered at the sourness that had come over Joey, the smith, for to bide his feelings, Hooligan would sing and whustle or take offince where there was no cause. But thry what he would— sing, whustle, or quarrel— through four long weeks, the bother stayed fretting at his mind, an' 'twould maybe have been there till this good day, had he not been forced to bring a cow an' two fat pigs up to the fair at Clonmel.

At that time, the fair at Clonmel had such a grand repitation for fun an' jolity that Joey wint early; an' afther sellin' the cattle an' gettin' a good price for them, he turned his attintion from the haggling of the cattle-buyers, as was only natural, to the wondhers and divarsions of the fair. Whilst so bint an' inclined, he was sthrollin' about here an' there, amusin' his idle eyes with the sthrange sights, whin what should he see as it was coming out and standin' at the door of a brown tint, but a wuzzard. And Joey stopped ferninst him and stood wondhering and pulling his whiskers. Now, ould Mrs. Casey could read taycups to make yer hair stand, so, if she wasn't a witch herself, she had daylins with them; and the beggar woman, Sally Foley, would put the black blight on the petaties if ye didn't give her the fill of her fist of coppers. To his sorrow, Joey knew both of thim well, but in all his born days before, he'd never met up with a wuzzard. Still and all, by rayson of the pictures he had seen and the tales he had heard, Hooligan knew without being tould that this was a soothersayer.

This sthranger was certainly the most mysterious lookin' crachure, man or mortial, ever seen before in Tipperary. At a fair, whin one person stops to look at a strange sight, another pushes up, then another and another, so while Joey was takin' his full of a look, a crowd the size of a funeral swayed this way an' that, every mouth spachless and every eye poppin' wild.

Over a round, red face that was fringed by redder whuskers, the wuzzard wore a tall, peaked cap, an' he had a long red dress with silver moons an goold stars sprinkled all over it. He talked haughty and commanding, and you could hear him half the fair away.

"Yer past, prisint, an' yer fuchure," he was sayin'. "The hidden saycrits of yer life rayvealed for a bit of silver! Come on, good people! Me fadder was a Aygyptian an' me mudder was a African. I'm the siventh son of a siventh son of a

siventh son," he says. "Is there any saycrit yez'd like diskivered. Is there anything yez'd like to know what yez would do?"

An' then an' there, ferninst the brown tint, Joey straightened stiff as a gun, for a pro-ject shot intil his mind with a swiftness that no other pro-ject had ever displayed itself there before in Joey's whole life.

Although Hooligan knew well that the loikes of thim forchune-tellers sell their sowls to Sattin for the power of foretellin', yet the smith was mortial hungry to find out the name of the thief that stole Blackie, so he raysoned with himself this away: "Well, if he's sold his sowl, that was before I met him, and since he's lost anyway, I can do him no harm."

"I'll tell yer past for nawthin', an' thin if yer satisfied with the strength of me power, I'll tell yer prisint an' yer fuchure for eight pince," bawled the soothersayer, lookin' hard with his little yallow eyes at Joey.

At thim worruds, though feelin' all the time in the marrow of his bones that this raysonable offer was only a timptaytion from the Divil, Joey began to argyfy with himself agin, and he says, "Be-dad, if Sattin has informayshun to sell, an' I pay him square an' honest for that same informayshun, sure there's no fayvors, granted on ayther side. He gives me what I bargain for, an' I pay him for what I get. Thin, there's no bones broke," says he.

There was always an irrayligious sthreak in thim Hooligans.

Thinkin' this away, the smith was standin' as I've tould ye, with one hand deep in his pocket, feelin' for the money, and his brows knitted, whin suddin the wuzzard stretched out a hand an' touched Joey on the showlder.

"Come in, me poor man," says the maygician. "I see plain the throuble that's wound up on the inside of ye. An' 'tis me that can unwind it."

There was something so confidential and at the same time so cocksure in the way the wuzzard spoke, that the smith hesitayted no longer. Although his conscience could have been heard acrass the lane, hollerin' at him, an' although he was a good dale frightened, still, without a worrud, he follyed Sattin's immissary intil the booth, an' the wuzzard pulled shut the flap of the tent. Thin the two sat on stools just ferninst aich other. The smith's big hand thrimbled a little whin the maygician took it up an' began peerin' intil the hard, black, horny palm.

"I'll begin on yer past an' yer prisint," says the wise man. An' with that, he shut both of his two eyes. Joey waited anxious for the first worruds, an' whin they came, they were so wondherfully thrue that the smith blinked with astonishment.

"Ye're a smith!" says the Wuzzard.

"My sowl," gasped Joey to himself. "He niver before in all his life seen me, an' I niver till this minute set eyes on the soothersayer."

"Ye have niver been very rich," says the Aygptian, thriumphant.

"Look at that now! No more have I," gasped Joey.

"But if ye were only rich, ye'd be a raymarkable man," the wuzzard says, solemn. That capped everything. Joey had always and ever since childhood said that same thing to himself, but no livin' sowl before had ever a-greed with him. That one bit of informaytion alone was worth more than the eight pence.

"Ye've had throuble," wint on the forchune-teller.

"I have! Lots of it," cried Joey, wagging his head pitiful.

"An' yer wife is sometimes onraysonable with ye," the wuzzard says.

The cowld pusperation started out on Joey's forehead. "Say no more," he says, growin' hoarse. "I'd give fi' pounds if only Nancy could hear ye say thim worruds. Here's the eight pince," he says. "Ye know me past like a book. Niver mind goin' over me prisint. I know that as well as ye do yerself. Unfold me fuchure," says the smith.

Joey could hear the crowd whuspering and sniggering just outside the tent door, but so entranced was the smith with wondher that he gave them no heed.

The soothersayer opened his eyes wider an', as he glared intil the smith's hand, wint on talkin'. An' he spoke hollow: "Ye'll get a letther," says the raymarkable man. "An' ye'll go on a journey," he says hurrying. "An' some of yer wife's relaytions'll take down sick, an' ye'll be rich someday, but 'tis little good that'll do ye, for ye'll not live long afther; an' yer wife'll be a great dale happier in her next marriage than she's been in this one. I think yer wife's name is Nancy," says the siventh son, suddenly frownin' gloomy up at Hooligan. "At laste there's a Nancy in yer hand," he says.

For a moment the smith was nonplushed, as well he might be; his face grew crimson. Thin he broke out: "Do you mane to tell me," he says, chokin', "that me wife— Nancy's her name, sure enough— do you mane to tell me that Nancy'll marry agin afther I'm dead and gone?" Joey widened his palm and frowned down into his own hand, the same as if he could read the signs himself.

"I'm only tellin' what I see plain in yer hand," says the soothersayer, cowld an' savage. "Don't crass me," he says. "Give me back yer paw. It isn't the likes of ignerant smiths that has the saycrits of the fuchure," says he.

Joey was still for one bitther minute; thin he bridled up. "Tell me," he says, "is the man she's to marry a little wiry fellow who wears a hairy cap?"

The wuzzard bent back Joey's fingers till they cracked and peered down a long time.

"I see in yer hand a hairy cap on the head of a little wiry man," rayplied the forchuneteller at last.

"Once more, answer me this: Is the little villain a schoolmasther?" axed the smith.

"He is, no less!" answered the wuzzard imaget.

"She rayfused Maurteen Cavanaugh, the schoolmasther, six times before we were married," says the smith, grittin' his teeth. "I'll go home now an' bate the life out of him," says he, startin' to get up.

"Have sinse," says the wuzzard, putting out his hand. "He has yit not an idee of what's comin', nor has Nancy, nor will they have till yer dead a year an' a day. There'd be no satisfaction in batin' a man onless ye towld him what ye were batin' him for, would there? An' if ye towld the schoolmasther, ye'd be the mock of the counthry. No, no, no, I have a betther way nor that," says the wuzzard, taking out of his pocket something that was like a snuffbox. "I have an enchanted powdher here that I med special for the Imperor of Boolgaria, on just such an oc-casion as this. Now, for four silver crowns, I'll give ye enough to make Nancy hate the schoolmasther all her life an' even afther."

With hand dipped far intil his pocket and one leg stretched, the smith strove to cogitate. The wise man mintioned four silver crowns in the same disrayspectful tone of voice in which he might say "four little petaties".

But, so far as Joey was consarned— an' the smith was, by no manner of manes, a stingy man— thim worruds gave him a toothache in his heart. Though four crowns would almost buy a foine young pig, the pain was not for the loss of the money alone, mind ye, but it came mostly from the needcessity of spindin' a sum like that for any such shuperflous purpose. Howandever, he answered nothing at all just thin; he only sunk a little lower on the stool, flinging one leg dayjected over the other an' his chin burried in the folds of his new cravat.

The wuzzard leaned over an' spoke confaydential. "This same powdher med the Quane of Swuzzerland thry to pizen the King of Rooshia— ah, thin, wasn't that same King of Rooshia a divil among the girls!" says the maygician, smilin' roguish an' pensive. "Many's the time he sint for me to ate dinner at his house. If I'd known 'twas agin him the powdher was to be intended, I'd never have sowld it to the Imperor of Boolgaria." He dhropped Joey's hand and propped his head on his own hand, his elbow on his knee.

"That's the way the royalty used to be cutting up. Poor people never know how lucky and contented they are. The Boolgarian slipped a taste of that same powdher into the Quane of Swuzzerland's punch one night whin we were all at a christening, an' it thwisted her feelings the other way altogether. Before that, she used to be langwidging afther the Rooshin." The wuzzard sighed raygretful. "Blessings be on thim ould happy days," he says, shakin' his head, "whin me an' the royalty used to wandher in one crowd from place to place, seekin' nothing but divarshin, an' we all as sociable an' as common in our ways an' talk with aich other as, saving yer prisence, a flock of geese." At this, his voice broke into a sigh. "Hi ja!" says he.

The longer the Aygyptian talked about kings and quanes an' high s'ciety, the smaller four crowns grew in Joey's eyes; they dwundled and they dwundled till, whin the wuzzard stopped an' hung his head sorrowful undher thim happy raymimbrances, a silver crown seemed about the vally of a copper fardin.

Straightening himself up, the smith said, "The price is not so onraysonable if the enchantment does its worruk," says he. "An' I'll take the chanst," he says. "But if it fails— if it doesn't purvent me widdy marryin' that man— begorra, if ye'll ever crass me path ag'in, I'll make surgent's worruk of ye. Mind that now," says he.

"I give ye lave," says the wuzzard, thumping his knee umphatic.

Well, what could Joey do but count the four crowns out of his leather bag, an' so disturbed was he about Nancy and the schoolmasther that after he had safely stowed away the powdher in the bottom of his leather purse, he was actwilly goin' out of the tint without axin' one worrud of Blackie, whin the bleatin' of a sheep which was bein' druve past outside, called to his mind the ould misfortune; so the lad turned, hurried, an' sat himself on the stool ag'in.

"I want ye to tell me," he says flusthered, "who was the blaggard that stole me pet lamb last Christmas Eve night," says he. "I must bate someone, or me heart'll bust inside of me. Sendin' me back the price by Father Cassidy, as he did, won't save the thief, nor the axin' of me pardon by the same manner and manes won't relayse him. Tell me his name, for salt won't save him."

"I saw all that in yer hand the first minute," sneered the maygician.

"Then why didn't ye tell it?" cried Joey, turnin' hot on the soothersayer.

"Ax yerself why I didn't," says the wuzzard, high an' lofty. "I only agreed to tell yer own past, prisint, an' fuchure for eight pince. There was no bargain I can raymimber of to go over your farm an' tell the past, prisint, an' fuchure of all your pigs an' cows an' sheep. I'd like to see meself," says the wuzzard. "Shame on ye!" he says.

Joey wasn't what ye might call lightfooted at an argyment, so he could think of no answer. All the same, he had a dull, hurt feeling that, in some way, he was being chated. So he threw a surly grunt and an ugly eye at the Aygyptian.

"None of yer black looks, me man," says the forchune-teller, swaggerin' his head. "Fair worruds will sarve ye betther here, me lad," he says.

Joey, at that, let a growl out of him that sounded like an impty barrow goin' over the stones, an' begorra, at the sound of it, the soothersayer put on a friendlier face an' spoke more modified. "I'll tell ye what I'll do," he says, confidin', "just so as to sind ye away satisfied. There's some questions I'm forbid to answer. The powers that have me in conthrol won't let me tell all I know. But, barrin' such things as I'm forbid to dishclose, for another shillin', I'll answer any four questions ye're amind to ax about the forchune of yer sheep. An' loathe enough am I to tell a bastes forchune at any price. It takes all me power. I haven't the strength of a cat for hours afther," he says.

Still sour-faced an' sullen, Joey took another shillin' from the leather bag an' tossed it at the Aygyptian, sayin' threatenin' as he did so, "Now go on. Tell me the past, prisint, an' fuchure of me sheep, an' tell it thrue," he growled.

The wuzard must have been a fighting man himself, for afther he got the last shillin' in his pocket, he brustled up, an' this time looked Joey square in the eye, an' the look he gave was so study an' so belittlin' that the big smith felt himself rayly growin' kind of cowering.

"Raymimber, I'm only to be axed questions," says the maygician. "But I don't mind tellin' ye that yer sheep has no prisint or fuchure; it only has a past. It was kilt an' ate long ago. That's why ye got back the money instid of the baste. But ax yer four questions, an' ax thim all at once," says he.

Joey wrunkled his brows an' for a while puzzled hard. Then, he says, says he, "First an' foremost, tell me the name of the man that stole me sheep. That'll be the first question. Thin ye'll unfold to me how he managed to get the baste away so quick an' complete. Thirdly," he says, "ye'll expatiate why the thief sint the money back by Father Cassidy, or why he sint it back at all. An' lastly, ye'll tell me, since there's a thief in the parish, why it is that he niver stole anything before nor since. Do that, an' ye'll take a powerful load off me mind," says he.

All this time, the wuzzard, his chin in his hand, was watchin' Joey with hawk's eyes, an' whin Hooligan had finished, the wise man picked up the smith's hand, an' afther peerin' intil it a full minute, began bending the palm, an' slapping it an' twisting the fingers till Joey cried out with hurt.

"I niver saw anything so mystarious," says the wuzzard. "There's one thing I can't make out for the life of me. Was the sheep stole at night or in the daytime? Yer hand don't show which it was."

With that, Hooligan, growin' impatient, up an' tould the time of night it all happened, an' in tellin' that, relayted everything else he knew consarning the sarcumstances.

The last worrud wasn't out of his mouth before the wuzzard, with a groan, started up from his stool.

"Wait a minute," he says whusperin'. "Must make a saycrit incantaytion.' Saying this, he went behind a black curtain which hung acrass the back pa-art of the tint. The cloth was left a little dhrawn, an' what did Joey see inside, sittin' on a box, but a skilliton's bare head, an' around the head was laid a row of bones.

The smith was staring, horrified, when the maygician, afther his saycrit incantaytion, came out and sat down again. Joey caught a quare, sthrong smell coming from the soothersayer. 'Twas some like the smell of whuskey.

"I find," says the maygician, "that I'm forbid to tell the name of the purloiner, but I'll give ye such a thrue dayscription of him that ye can go from the door of this tint an' lay yer hands on his showldher.

"Listen: First, he's a near neighbor; that's why he got the lamb away so quick an' so complate. Next, he's an honest man; that's the rayson he niver stole before nor since. He's a rayligious, man, too; ye may know that by the way he ran to Father Cassidy.

"Lastly, an' by this sign ye may know him best of all: he's powerful proud; so a-mazin' proud that, rather than let his hunger be known to the kindly-hearted neighbors about, he'd commit sheep-staylin', the most disgraceful of all criminal crimes. Don't be too hard on the unfortinit sowl, for I tell ye, his need was great that black time. And now," says the wuzzard, getting up and guiding Joey gently toward the door, "afther that dayscription, ye're a dull man if ye can't go out an' lay yer hand on him."

Bekase Joey didn't like to admit himself a dull man, an' bekase, too, the maning of things always came to him not sudden, but afther awhile, the lad was contint to ax no more questions, bein' sartin sure that the name itself would drift in on his mind during the journey home.

Ye may believe what ye like but the wondher-struck, satisfied look on the smith's face as he marched out of the maygician's tint into the waitin' crowd med the Aygyptian's fortune that day.

Howandever, sorra mind did Joey mind the stares of the pushin' crowd, an' just as little attintion did he give to their impident questionings, but, showldering his way through the throng, he welted his brogues down the sthreets of the town an' out intil the quiet counthry lane. The spring twilight was just settlin' down over the white of the hawthorn bushes and the new green of the meadows. As he wint along, his thoughts were thrippin' an' throwin' aich other.

Instead of one mysthery to dale with, now Joey Hooligan had two; that about his wife, Nancy, an' Maurteen almost smothered the first. Oh, how he longed to grip his two hands in the schoolmasther's hair. But no, he must kape that throuble covered in the bottommost hole of his heart, for very shame sake, if for nothing else.

While thinkin' of Maurteen, another idee popped up sudden an' startlin'. Was it Maurteen that stole Blackie? No, that couldn't be, bekase the thief was a rayligious man. Was it Father Cassidy, thin? Surely no, for where was the needcessity! The clargyman might have anything Joey owned an' welcome just for the axin'. So in that way the boy wint on, casting a blot of the charackther, aich in his turn, of every man, woman, and child in the parish, except one, an' that one fillin' the soothersayer's dayscription best of all.

I think that one man would have escaped suspicion altogether if, by a sthrange chanst, the smith hadn't spied on the road not a quarter of a mile in front, a stooped, slender figure hurrying along in the same di-rection as Joey himself was goin'.

"Begorra, there goes Dennis Egan, the scholar. Oh, by the powers—" The smith stopped stock still in the road and began scratchin' his head with both hands. "But no," he mutthered, "it couldn't be the loikes of him any aisier than it could be the loikes of Father Cassidy. Though it's mortial proud an' big feelin' he an' his family are, sure enough. Didn't a score of the boys hear him give backtalk to the priest himself at the last illiction? Wirra, wirra," says Joey, growin' throubled, "an' he's a rayligious man an' a near neighbor, too."

The onwelcome suspicion worried the smith greatly. Now ye know, the scholar an' his family were what ye might call rayfined people, an' hilt thimselves shuparior to most others in the parish; yet they had had great friends with the Hooligans, though in a lofty kind of way. Indade, fifteen years before that, the scholar an' his wife had condayscinded to stand sponsors for Joey's firstborn, Dan'l O'Connell Hooligan.

"No, no, it can can't be him," Joey argyed to a blackbird that was darting back an' forth in front of him. "He never was in needcessity. Though, by tunder, come

to think of it, last summer the blight did come upon their corn! He never raised many petaties," says Joey to the bird, anxious, "yet the scholar couldn't be in want for all that, for didn't he sell every hoofed an' horned baste on his place an' turned them intil money the Ayster purvious; so that he must have a hatful of goolden suverings in the house. Am n't I the dunderheaded omadhaun to accuse such a man. But the scholar is a wise man," he says ag'in, "an' I wondher if 'twould be presumin' to go an' tell him what the soothersayer dayscribed to me," Joey says. "I have no manner of doubt but what he will name the criminal imaget," says he to himself.

Filled brimmin' up with thim thoughts, an' growin' excited at the good chanst of at last finding out the name of the mystarious thief, Joey broke intil a sharp trot an', catchin' up with the scholar, dhropped intil step at his side.

Never before had Joey noticed how ould an' haggard the proud man's thin, shaven face was growin' an' how slow he walked; it even seemed that Dennis was hanging back a little to let the smith pass. Without even bidding the time of the day, Joey tapped the scholar on the back. "Dennis Egan," says Joey, "I've found out who stole Blackie." The proud man's face tightened so that Joey thought that the light sthroke on the showldher must have hurt him.

"He's one," wint on Joey, savage, "who was too proud to beg, an' he's so rayligious an' so rayspectable," says the smith, sarcastic, "that no one misdoubted him."

Egan's cheeks turned gray as ashes, an' he thried to moisten his lips with his dhry tongue. Hooligan noticed these things at the time, but he didn't put them intil their right places until long aftherward.

"His conscience is throublin' him now," says Joey, givin' his stick an angry shake, "but wait till I'm done with him. I'll kill him first an' have him thransported afther," says he.

Thin it was that Egan spoke, an' whin he did, astonishment at his sthrange, wild worruds knocked the big smith spacheless. Not that Joey understood rightly even then, but the scholar's look was so pathryfying.

"O God in Hiven, Your blow has fallen!" Egan cried, standin' still in the road an' spreadin' wild an' wide his two stiff arrums. "O Father of marcy, be pittiful to me an' to me innocent childher, an' to her!" he says with a dhry sob.

Joey stood gapin', the first thought in his mind bein' that there was a dangerous sickness among some of thim up at the scholar's. Next, Egan turned fierce an' sudden on the smith.

"Wait before you sthrike, Joey Hooligan. You'll never know the need I was in, man. Me petaties an' me corn runed— you know that— an' me money in the bottom of the say."

"Why I— I— I— thought ye were rich," gasped Joey, the thrue idea beginning to bore its way intil his head.

"An' wasn't I!" says the scholar. "I had scraped together every livin' thing I owned an' sowld them, an' it med foive hundhred pounds, an' I sint it till me cousin, Dan McTighe, in Claremorris, an' he, too, had foive hundhred pounds, an' we put the money intil cattle, an' Dan tuck them to England an' sowld them there."

"My, oh my! That was a thousand pounds!" says Hooligan.

Egan wint on talkin' fast an' dusperate, 'mindin' one for all the worruld of a wild baste in a thrap. "Comin' back, Dan's ship wint intil another ship in the channel, and— I've wisht a hundhred times since that I was rowling calm beside him at the bottom of the say."

Joey hadn't time as yet to rayalize in full or get vexed consarnin' Blackie; besides, everything was swirling about in a whirlpool of astonishment. "But what of the thousand pounds?" was all he could say.

"There was more," says Egan, "more; there was a profit. Well, the hopeless days closed in, an' little by little, we dayvoured what was left at home, till black, naked hunger came at last to sit in the chimney corner that niver before had known anything except comfort an' plenty. But a still bittherer pain crept in an' sat beside the hunger, an' that was the dhread which we all felt that some of the neighbors we'd so often lorded it over— God knows with how little rayson— might find out our sitiwation an' pity us. Father Cassidy I avoided most of all, bekase of the hot worruds we'd give aich other at the illiction."

The two were fronting aich other now in the dusk; the scholar's arms had sunk to his side. "My, oh my, but weren't yez the foolish people!" says the smith.

"One night," Egan wint on, not mindin', and his voice came dhry and broken, "I left home to walk down to Claremorris, hoping that me cousin's family might spare me a little, though I knew 'twas little they had left. I thramped on foot three days an' one night, only to find them as bad off as meself. Back I came without asking them, an' was four days on me journey. Ye may guess I was footsore an' heartsore, and on the last day, I was sick an' wake from the hunger. Christmas Eve, I dhragged meself past your own good house, an' I saw the bright lights in your windys an' heard the happy laughin' of your childher, an' inside with them

the dog barkin' in his play— an' I goin' home to carry to me own famishing ones only disappointment an' dispair."

"I'm ashamed of ye—" Joey started to say, but the other stopped him.

"Yerself stood fumbling at the door of the forge, and lest ye might be a witness to me misery, I stopped behind the oak three till you wor gone."

"Wow!" shouted Joey, hitting one fist intil the other.

"An' as you bent over the lock, I saw what I thought was the dog run out behind ye intil the road. Sure now I know it was the sheep."

"Tare and ages!" cried Joey again. "Of all bastes in the worruld, a sheep or a lamb have the laste reliableness," he says.

"A little way down the road, I heard somethin' follyin' behindt, an' lookin' back, I saw it was a young sheep that was throttin' along afther. I swear to ye, by the sowls of the parents I have dishonored, that I had no thought of taking it thin. I only hurried on till I came within sight of me own house. Not a light shone out in welcome. The cottage stood there lookin' dark and huddled as me own sowl. I listened at the door, but there was no sound from within. A shuddering dhread that the wife and childher might be starved an' dead turned me faint an' sick, an' I was afeared to lift the latch. Me head was a bit dizzy, too, from the wakeness, I think. So I studied meself with a hand ag'in the house— this a-way— an' creepin' around to the windy, I looked in."

He stopped a second, broke by the raymimbrance. The big smith lay a gentle hand on the man's shoulder. "Go on," says the smith. "It's a lucky hour we met the night. What ye're sayin' will lift the load off yer sowl. Go on! No livin' person'll ever get tidings from me. God help ye and fergive ye as I do with all me heart."

"The wife an' childher lay in their beds, cuddled up together for the warmth, an' alive. Thank God! At that sight, me heart began to beat once more. I laned on the windysill prayin' to Hiven for to know what worruds to greet them with when I'd go in.

"But worruds wouldn't come. An' as I kneeled down with me forehead hid upon the sill, there came a soft cry from behindt, an' lookin' round, I saw the black pet lamb which had followed afther.

"You'll never know— God only knows how farvint I called up the last bit of strength to fight ag'in that timptation. But 'twas no use. Only this I'll tell ye, that I raymimbered in that instant, an' the raycollection was like a touch of hot iron: that never before had one of me name or breed done a mane or dishonest act. I was to be the first. So 'twas with the feelin's of a murdherer that I slipped through the back door an' from the kitchen stole out the sharp knife." The scholar glanced

frightened over his showldher an' his big eyes were like the eyes of a man who is seeing a ghost. With a hand at his throat he gulped a couple times an' thin wint on.

"The thrusting little crachure touched this hand with cowld, wet nose an' follyed where I led it out intil the middle of me own field, an' there in the darkness—" He could go no furder bekase of the sobs that were chokin' him, so dhrawing the collar of his coat up over his eyes, the poor man gave way to a perfick hurricane of crying.

As for Joey, the smith had no feelin's at all but those of smothering pity mixed with a sort of guilty onasiness that, by some way or other, he himself had done something undherhanded. Two or three times, worruds of comfort got as far as the big man's lips, but there they lay jumbled and useless at the ind of his tongue. So for a while, he just stood in the road ferninst the other, twishting his heel restless an' givin' little coughs. Whin he did spake at last, it was to say. "Have sinse, Dennis Egan! Sure many's the dacint man before you turned sheepstayler. I may do it meself yet. We niver know what we'll do till we're thried," he says, awkward. "Come on home," says he.

'Twasn't just what Hooligan said nor the gentle touch laid on the cryin' man's arrum that roused the scholar, but 'twas the friendly, sootherin' sound of the smith's rough voice. At any rate, whin Dennis began talkin' ag'in, he stood with hands clasped together an' his arrums twitchin' narvous, an' his head bint like a little boy that had just got a batin'.

"Ye were ever the foine-hearted man, Joey Hooligan, dull as ye are," he says. "I'll never forget that Christmas mornin', how, whin I knelt in the chapel, you came in an' knelt down beside me, an' how I shrank from ye as though I was a leper. There was God Himself lookin' down at both of us, an' you kneelin' honest an' brave, an' I, with me pride an' me honor, an' me courage withered like a winther's reed. I couldn't stand it long, but crep' out intil the air to wandher about all day, a vagabone an' a thief, afeared of the sight of even me own childher."

"Don't mind telling any more," says the smith, striving to save himself from the pain of listening. "Come on home, now. It's dark." He took Egan by the arm and led him down the road. But the scholar's heart must get relief from its bursting load, and he kept talking as they went.

" 'Twas a bed med of livin' coals I slept on that night, an' just at daybreak, I arose an' wint where I should have gone at first, up to Father Cassidy. Oh, may the saints pursarve him! He helped me with money, an' he helped me a hundhred times more by the things he said. An' afther that day an' everyday he helped me

ag'in. He gave me the quarther's rint, he bought me the petaties an' the corn for seed, an' whin the letther came from the lawyers sayin' that the Englishman paid poor Dan McTighe for the cattle, not in money, but in papers dhrawn ag'in a bank, an' that there was siven hundhred an' fifty pounds waitin' for me to dhraw out, 'twas Father Cassidy—"

Joey stiffened with amazement, and wheeled the scholar to face him in the road. "Don't tell me," he gasped. "Did yez get it?" says he.

"I did," says Egan, "an' there, ye know the whole miserable story. An' there's yer stick in yer hand an' here's the thief, an' if ye'll bate me good an' plenty, I'll feel betther than I have felt for many a day. Only I beg of yez, for the love of God, not to tell on me," he axes pitiful.

The idee of batin' a man worth siven hundhred pounds was reediculous, not to say irrayligious, so Joey, with one hand in his pocket, an' his brow in deep ridges, answered, "As ye say, Dennis Egan, I'm a dull man, an' I can't think quick, an' I can't give raysons for what I do. Only now I have the feelin' that someway I'm in the wrong. That God borryed from me, to whom he'd allowed plinty, an' give it to you that had nothing at all, an' that I took pay an' dhrove a harrud bargain with Him, to whom I owe everything. I may be wrong, but I think I'll have nayther luck nor grace so long as I carry about with me the price of that sheep. Ye must take it back, Dennis Egan," he says, slow an' airnest.

But the scholar, with hands lifted, shrank from him. "No," he says. "The only comfort I have is that I med amends. Don't dayprive me of it," says he.

"Well," says Joey, "may God forgive ye as I freely do. We'll away now with the money to Father Cassidy an' ax him what we'll do with it. But have no fear of me tellin' on ye, Dennis," says he.

An' so, they both together wint off to the priest's house, but what he did with the money I never heerd.

An' by the same token, no one ever heerd this story that I'm afther tellin' ye, till two years ago, whin the Egans wint to live in England. Thin it leaked out some way.

But Joey Hooligan is still throubled in his mind about his wife an' Maurteen Cavanaugh; for although he put the brown powdher in her tay faithful, an' with every eye in his head as big as the taycup watched her swally it, still he's afeared it mightn't worruk well. She med a wry mouth, to be sure, an' spluttered, "Bad cess to it, I must have put salt in me tay." But she looked and acted just the same afther takin' it as before— not a ha'porth of difference. So when he comes sudden acrass Maurteen in the road, it always gives Joey a turn. An' whin Nancy

buys a purty new dish or a thing like that, Joey, sly an' as if be accident, breaks it so that be no chanst Maurteen'll get the use of it; and the smith wears his best shuit of clothes on the slightest occasion, so that they'll be well used an' spint whin he dies.'

One resolution is set firm in Hooligan's mind: whin he will feel sure that death's comin' on, he'll call his eldest son to his bedside an' say, "Dan'l O'Connell Hooligan, I charge ye an' put it on yer conscience that if ye ever see that little sneakin' Maurteen Cavanaugh spakin' civil to any faymale member of this family, ye'll throunce him; an' if he ever crasses this thrashol' when I'm dead, ye'll bate the life out of him."

An' 'tis a consolation for the smith to know that Dan'l never had any great fondness for the school or the schoolmaster.

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## 4: Bridgeen and the Leprechaun

"OUTSIDE of France, the month of May is not the month of May," Victor Hugo says. Surely, surely the great poet never saw the break of May in Ireland. If on the May day we are talking about, he had walked down the winding road from Ballinderg by little Bridgeen Daley's side, and with her had kept his eyes and ears awake, looking in the ditches and under the hedges for the Leprechaun, the little fairy cobbler, he would have changed that saying entirely, I'm thinking.

On either side of the narrow lane pressed the bursting hedges, dazzling pink and white, while beyond, in the fields over every hillock and upland, surged riotous crowds of laughing, yellow buttercups and golden-hearted daisies. And the violets— every green leaf hid a purple cluster! And the perfume— but sure, one can't talk about the perfume of the Irish violets, because it gives one such a lonesome, longing heartsickness to think about them there! The linnets and the blackbirds contended desperately with one another as to who should give the heartiest, merriest welcome to the spring. And above all hovered the kindly sky, as grave, as blue, and as tender as Bridgeen's own eyes.

But back in the village of Ballinderg, it was little about blackbirds and linnets the people were thinking. Little Mickey Driscoll, who never before in all the troubled days of his short life had resented any honestly earned cuff on the ear, today leaned disconsolately against the shady side of the thatched cottage, weeping torrents of indignant tears into the short skirt of his brown linsey frock.

A few feet away, on an upturned tub beside the open door, sat his subdued and commiserating father, too wise for any open expression of sympathy or comfort, but nodding and winking covert assurances and beckoning to the lad with coaxing, compassionate fingers.

"Come over here, Mickey avick," he whispered. "Don't cry, ahager. Where did she slap ye? Oh my, oh my, on the two little red legs of ye! What did ye do, alannah?"

"Naw-nawthin', Da-daddy; I— I— only dhrew wan finger down, that a-way, on sisther Eileen's white dhress to see if it would make a mark," sobbed the heartbroken child.

"Oh, isn't that the turrible thing," soothed his hypocritical parent, "to larrup ye loike that just for wan weeney bit of a sthreek. Oh, husheen, husheen. No wondher yer heart's in tatthers!" He drew the little lad between his knees and smoothed his tumbled, yellow curls.

Daniel Driscoll and his weeping son Mickey were not the only victims of feminine oppression in Ballinderg that Saturday afternoon; they but typified the general state of affairs, for in every cottage, an anxious, flustered woman was bustling back and forth from dresser to clothespress and from bedroom back to kitchen, and woe betide any unfortunate man or child or four-footed beast that got in the way of her flying feet!

On each side of the winding village street, the male portion of the community, apprehensive, subdued, and biddable, sat smoking their pipes under the projecting thatch of the cottages. The air was tense with expectation. Today no child loitered on an errand. At the first word of command, there was a flash of bare legs, a swish of red petticoat, and he was shot across the street from threshold to threshold with the speed and precision of field-gun practice.

And who could blame the busy mothers for their feverish perturbation! Wasn't the archbishop himself— not the bishop, mind you, but the archbishop— coming down on the morrow to the humble village chapel to give Confirmation to the children. Don't be talkin'! Wasn't Father Cassidy the clever man entirely to get such an honor for Ballinderg?

But, oh dear, the bother of it! What with the grandeur of white veils and wreaths for the girls and brand-new suits for the boys— shoes for a good many of them, too— the parish was fairly turned upside down and made bankrupt, so it was.

Late in the afternoon, Father Cassidy, tired and happy, having put the last touch to the decorations in the chapel and the last bunch of wildflowers in the altar vases, went cantering home along the gravel country lane on his black hunter, Terror.

He passed through the village and had almost reached the Ballymore crossroads when he spied, just ahead of him, a slim, barefooted little girl, trudging wearily along and carrying in her clasped arms a pair of brogues almost as heavy as herself.

"It's Bridgeen Daley," he muttered. "The kind Lord look down on that houseful of motherless children."

Father Cassidy reined in his horse beside her. "Is that you, Bridgeen?" he called. "Come here, asthore. Oh, I see ye've been to Neddy Hagan's to get yer father's brogues mended. I'm greatly afraid all this grandeur will be the ruination of us at last."

The little girl bobbed a curtsey and raised a pair of timid blue eyes to the priest's face.

"I hear everyone saying, alannah, what a grand little mother you are to the brothers and sisters since— your poor mother was taken away from you; and it's pleased I am and proud of you."

The ghost of a smile flickered a moment over the child's sensitive lips. Wasn't it the grand thing entirely to be praised like that by such a great man as Father Cassidy! But it's little he knew the trouble Bridgeen had with those same brothers and sisters; indeed, she was strongly tempted to tell him of the goings on of Jamesy. Musha, why shouldn't she tell him? When Daniel Casey, the tailor, went wrong with the drink, didn't his wife, Julia, call in Father Cassidy to put corrections on Daniel? And didn't it work wonders?

As if reading her thought, the priest bent low and looked almost deferentially into the innocent, blushing face. "I suppose it's great trials entirely you have with them, acushla?"

Thus encouraged, the colleen broke forth: "Jamesy's the worst, sir," she cried. "Even Paudeen, the baby, is more biddable— and Jamesy four years old yisterday and ought to have more sinse. But nothin' plazes him, yer riverence, but pokin' at the fire. Whin I go home now, I'll warrant it's hunkerin' in the ashes I'll find him. If yer honor's riverence'd only stop in and give him a spakin' to"— there was a little catch in Bridgeen's voice as she realized her boldness—"I'd— I'd take it kind."

Father Cassidy shook his head in sorrowful surprise. "Dear, dear, will you look at that now! I wouldn't have believed it of Jamesy, and him four years old, too. Wait till I lay me eyes on him! However, 'tis of yourself I'd like to be asking. Are you all ready for the Confirmation tomorrow? Have you yer white wreath and veil?"

Bridgeen's eyes dropped instantly, and she fell to digging in the turf with a bare toe. "No," she half-whispered, and her head dropped lower and lower.

Wasn't it a terrible thing to be the only girl in the chapel before the archbishop without a white wreath and veil! But, ochone mavrone, the pennies which her mother and she had so carefully hoarded for them had gone a fortnight ago to buy the makings of a sober, brown shroud with which to cover a quiet breast.

"Never mind, mavourneen," said Father Cassidy. "I've a plan. On your way home, do you be looking carefully under the hedge as you go along, and who knows but what you may meet up with the Leprechaun. Do you know what the Leprechaun is, Bridgeen?"

"Yis, sir— I mane, yer riverence— he's the sly, wee, fairy cobbler that sits undher a twig makin' shoes for the Little People; and if ye can only find him and

kape yer eye on him the while, it's three grand wishes he'll give ye to buy his freedom."

"True for you, Bridgeen, but remember what a cunning trickster the lad is; if he can beguile you to take your eyes from him for a second, he's gone forever; don't forget that. I'm on now. Take the lane and hurry home, asthore, and I'll take the road and keep an eye out for him meself, an' whichever of us finds the Leprechaun first will go and tell the other." There was a laugh in Father Cassidy's eyes as he nodded good-day. Then something tinkled on the road at Bridgeen's feet. She stopped to pick it up. Wonders! It was a bright silver shilling.

"Thank you kindly, yer riverence," she gasped, but Father Cassidy was already galloping away, down the road, laughing softly to himself.

Look at that now, Father Cassidy himself to be talking of the Leprechaun. Why, then, in spite of what the schoolmaster said, there was truly such a little fairy man, dressed in a green cloak and red cap. It was no lie at all Tim O'Brien was telling. Dear, dear, wouldn't it be the grandest luck in the world if one could only—

"But sure, what good if I did meet up with him?" thought Bridgeen. "Isn't it too frightened to spake to him I'd be, let alone clever enough to make the like of him a prisoner? But the wishes! Oh, if I only could."

Bridgeen had heard a hundred times how years and years ago, it was a fairy thrush that had coaxed Tim O'Brien out of this same lane— in troth, almost from this same spot— across the fields to the fairy rath, where, Tim declared, he saw the Leprechaun. Now a thrush which had followed Bridgeen from the village, whirring in short flights along the top of the hedge, stopped on a branch just above her head and began singing fit to burst his swelling throat. And indeed 'twas he that had the fine, friendly song with him!

At first, it's little heed the child gave to the bird, for the priest's last words had raised a solemn wonder in her mind; for now, after what Father Cassidy had said, there could be no danger in asking from the fairy cobbler the favor of three wishes. Neither could it be wrong for one to search for the little fairy; didn't the priest himself bid her look carefully under the hedges, and didn't he promise to do that same? Well, wasn't it a queer world entirely!

By this time, she had reached the stile into Hagan's meadow, so she seated herself on the lowest step to think up the three best wishes and to rest her arms from the heavy brogues.

Wouldn't it be the grand fortune entirely to meet the Leprechaun? She turned a dozen wishes over and over in her mind. There was the wreath and veil for

herself, of course, but then, on the other hand, there were potatoes and meal for next week, and barely enough turnips for the cow, and the turf down to the last row, and oh, so many needed things; but, above and beyond them all, one impossible, shining wish.

However, Father Cassidy had bidden her to hurry home, so, putting aside the pleasant wishes, Bridgeen slowly picked up the brogues from the grass where she had laid them and arose to go. As she did so, she cast anxious eyes at the big, red sun which was already sending slow-creeping shadows across the fields. And lo! as she looked, there arose sharp and clear before her the great dead tree off at the foot of the blue hills, the tree that marked the fairy rath where Tim O'Brien once had seen the Leprechaun.

"Why couldn't I go there looking for him?" The colleen trembled with excitement. "But it would be dark before I could go to the fairy fort and back again," she thought, shrinkingly.

And the distant tree towered so gloomily, so lonesomely, so silently, that Bridgeen hesitated, with her foot on the stile. But only an instant did she pause, for the friendly thrush which had followed her down the lane from the village rose out of the hedge nearby and, with a coaxing, beguiling trill, darted away across the meadow toward the fairy sentinel tree.

"I do believe he's calling me," she whispered.

The cheery note of the thrush took much of the lonesomeness out of the gathering shadows, and Bridgeen, with an answering cry in her throat, quickly hid her father's brogues under the stile and, without so much as a glance behind, followed the bird's flight.

Eager and brave enough she ran across the fields after the twinkling brown speck which, with many excited calls and soft, coaxing trills, lured her straight as a sunbeam through the cool, damp grass. Out of the meadow over the upland Bridgeen sped down from the upland into the moor she flew. An astonished curlew sent up a reproachful cry, and the moor hens, indignant at this untimely intrusion, fluttered angrily out of the bog.

The wind beating against the girl's face as she ran blurred the sight of her wide, blue eyes; and by and by, because of a throbbing in her temples, the line between earth and sky began to waver unsteadily up and down. Then, too, a mysterious, shadowy form, invisible, but nevertheless strongly palpable to her excited imagination, peeped out of the ditch after she had passed, and she knew that another strange shape crouched hidden in the rushes.

But, in spite of all her fears, a new, wild hope lent fluttering courage to her heart and gave such strength of speed to her bare, brown feet that before Bridgeen realized how far she had traveled, the gray, withered sentinel tree flashed up from the ground in her path and stood towering high above her head.

With a quick clasp of her hands and a frightened little gasp, Bridgeen stopped short and looked timidly around. Well might she hesitate! Just a few yards beyond the tree, shadowy, dark, and dumb, crouched the low green mound which was famed through all the countryside as the Leprechaun's fairy fort.

There was not a man in the barony, let alone a child, foolhardy enough to venture to this spot after dark; and, yet here was Bridgeen standing alone in that very place, with the sun fast disappearing behind the mountains.

To gain a moment's courage, she turned and looked in the direction of the village. It seemed miles and miles away, and a soft, white mist was creeping low along the meadows, cutting her off from the world of living things. There was not a cricket's chirp to break the throbbing silence. Even a curlew's cry would have brought some comfort with it. As she listened, a chilling sense of utter loneliness fell upon her, and a nameless dread reached out and touched her like a ghostly hand.

Overcome by a shapeless fear, she turned to fly from the awesome spot, when, clear and cheery from a leafless bough above her head, the same thrush began to call. Bridgeen paused, wonderstruck, for the bird was now chirping as plainly almost as spoken words: "The Leprechaun! The Leprechaun!"

'Twas like a friend's voice in her ear and brought with it the recollection of the importance of her mission. She hesitated no longer. Stealthily and still half-afraid, she tiptoed her way over to the shallow ditch which ran about the enchanted place and, with many a shuddering glance, stepped slowly down. There was nothing there save mayflowers, ivy, and daisies.

It was in this very ditch that Tim O'Brien had seen the Leprechaun; Bridgeen remembered that well. Her heart beating like that of a captured bird, the child stood, with parted lips and panting breast, wondering whether she should go to the right or to the left, when the twigs stirred on the bank above her head, and glancing quickly up, she saw through the fringe of leaves two round, golden eyes peering down upon her.

For one horrified instant, Bridgeen stared fascinated at the eyes, and the eyes, fixed and unwinking, glared back at her. All power of motion deserted the child. Then a smothered cry broke from her lips. At the sound of her voice, a pair of slim ears popped straight up above the eyes, and a great brown rabbit sat up on his

haunches and listened for a moment, greatly surprised. Then, as though reassured, he coolly turned and, with a saucy whisk of his fluffy tail, scampered out of sight.

With a quick laugh of relief, the nervous colleen wiped her lips with her apron and crept on her way round the fairy rath. She looked eagerly under every bush, and behind every clump of rushes, but found no sign of the Leprechaun. After making the circle, so tired was Bridgeen and so disheartened that she sat herself down to think. But lo and behold you, she had hardly time to settle herself comfortably, when from somewhere behind her came the tack, tack, tack of a little hammer!

She listened, every sense alert. There could be no mistake. From behind a sloe bush not five feet away, the sound came tinkling clear as a bell: tack-tack-tack-tack.

"Surely," said Bridgeen to herself, and she trembled at the thought, "it must be the Leprechaun!"

Then quietly, oh, so quietly, she stole over to the sloe bush and peeped cautiously behind it. There, in truth, was a sight of wonder. Seated on a flat stone and partly hidden by the grass, worked a frowning little bald-headed cobbler, not the height of Bridgeen's knee, hammering and stitching with all his might on a dainty wee slipper, the size of your thumb.

While Bridgeen stared, the fairy, frowning deeper still, began singing in a high, querulous voice:

*Tick, tack, tickety, tack!*
*I've not a breath to lose;*
*Bad manners to their dancing,*
*But they're cruel on their shoes!*
*The quane plays on her silver pipes,*
*The king lolls on his throne.*
*But underneath the hawthorn three*
*I mend and moil alone.*

He stopped singing. "All the rest of the world spendin' their lives in fun and jollity!" he muttered. "Wirra, wirra, I'm fair kilt with work, so I am." With a vicious bang of the little hammer he started again:

*They trail their robes of shiny silk*

*Wear many a jeweled ring;*
*I'd make them careful of their brogues,*
*If I could be the king.*
*They ride the wind from cloud to cloud*
*'Mid wonder and delight,*
*But I must stitch the satin shoes*
*The quane will wear tonight.*
*The mist is on the spangled fields;*
*I'm perished with the frost!*
*If a mortal's eyes falls on me,*
*Tare an' ages, sure I'm lost!*
*He may ask for love and beauty;*
*Sure they always ask for wealth;*
*Much good in love or beauty Huh!*
*I'd rather have me health.*

Tick, tack, tickety, tack— Suddenly, as if stuck by a pin, he sprang to his feet and turned, shaking his tiny hammer at Bridgeen. "What's the worruld comin' to," he shouted fiercely, "whin one of your age comes gallopin' and cavortin' over the fields to torture out of a poor ould man the favor of three wishes, you young r-r-rob-ber?"

"No, no, Misther Leprechaun, not that at all," Bridgeen hurried to say. "I don't want to force yer honor to do anything. I came only to beg from you one little wish. See, I will take my eyes from you, so that you may go away if you like; but, oh, it would be kind of you, indeed, indeed it would, to hear the wish before you go."

"Do! Take yer eyes from me! I dare ye!" snapped the little man.

And indeed, turn away her head she did; but when she looked back to the rock again, there still sat the little cobbler much as before, only now there was a friendlier light shining through his big spectacles.

"That was the daycintest thrick," vowed he, thumping the rock with his fist, "that I've seen a human crachure do in foive hundhred years. I mane whin ye turned yer head, mavourneen. By rayson, I've a gr-reat curiosity to know what this one grand thing is that ye'd be after wishin' for. It's a crock o'goold, no doubt," he said, peering.

Bridgeen shook her head sadly and threw him a wistful look.

The Leprechaun dropped his chin into his hand and stared quizzically. "It's a coach an' four thin, I'm thinkin'," he ventured.

The sad, wistful look deepened on Bridgeen's face.

The Leprechaun puzzled a moment in silence and then spoke up quickly: "A-ha! I have it now! If it isn't a purty red dhress wid green ribbons, an' a hat wid a feather as long as yer arrum, thin I'm fair bate out!" exulted he, clasping his knee in his hands and leaning back.

The little girl still hesitated.

"Millia murdher! Isn't it that ayther? Out with it! Spake up!" he encouraged.

Bridgeen nervously plaited the corner of her apron in her fingers and answered, "It isn't any of thim things I want at all, at all," she hesitated. Then, boldly, "Of course, I need a white veil and wreath and dress for my Confirmation tomorrow."

"Oh my! Oh my!" broke in the Leprechaun. "The wreath, and the veil and the purty white dhress! Oh dear! Oh dear!"

"Still," Bridgeen continued, "It isn't for thim I came to ask you."

"Tare an' ages, what is it, thin? Ye're makin' me narvous! I niver saw such a quare little colleen."

"A fortnight ago last Monday"— and Bridgeen bit her lips to hide the tremble—"my mother died; and oh, how can I live longer without her!"

The Leprechaun slowly wagged his head and clucked his tongue sympathetically.

Bridgeen faltered. "I know she's in Heaven, as Father Cassidy says, and that it's cruel and wicked to wish her back to life again; but I know, too, that even if she is happy with the angels, she still must miss little Paudeen, the baby, sometimes—and, Misther Leprechaun, the one wish I have is that you'll let me see my mother for a minute, just for a minute, won't you?" Without realizing the boldness of it, she stretched her hands out to him, all the pleading of the world in her eager eyes.

The little cobbler shook his head sadly. "What good'd that do?" he sighed.

"If you only knew how my heart aches and aches for a sight of her when I go home and find her not there! You don't know what a terrible thing it is to be without your mother, Leprechaun, do you?"

"I don't," he answered, wiping his eyes with the corner of his apron. "I never had a mother, but I can aymagine. I wish I could bring her to ye, acushla, but it's beyant me power, I'm sorry to say. Ye see, she's a blessed sperrit up in Heaven, and we Fairies are only onblessed sperrits down here, ye undherstand; an' it's

little the likes of her'd have to do with the likes of us. But maybe the talk I'm talkin' is too deep for ye, colleen. It's tayology," he said with a grand sweep of his hand.

The last hope was gone. Her head sank forward in a despair too deep for tears. "Never again! O Mother! Mother!"

The Leprechaun had pushed his spectacles high on his forehead and was vigorously wiping his eyes with his sleeve. "Stop, mavourneen," he said gruffly, ashamed of his weakness. "Now maybe it isn't so bad as all that. Whist now!" He paused a moment in deep thought, and a grim, determined look stole over his odd little face.

"I'm goin', Bridgeen Daley," he said, getting up and tightening the strings on his leather apron. "Sthop yer cryin', an' dhry yer eyes. I'm off. I may get insulted an' I may be malthrated, and at the very laste, I'm sure to have an ackerymoneous argymint. Howandever, what I can do, I will do, an' what I can't do, I won't do, but I'll sthrive my best endayvors; so do you go and sit again undher that withered three, and we'll see what'll happen. Don't be afeared, for if a thousand fairies were there ferninst ye, they'd not harm a hair of yer purty head. But whatever ye do, stir not a stir, and spake not a worrud till the shadow of this three raiches yondher hazel bush. Goodbye. I'm off!" And flash! he was gone.

Bridgeen went and sat under the tree as she was told. Presently she noticed how the stealthy shadow of the tree crept nearer and nearer the hazel bush. At last, the quivering tracings of the topmost branch, reaching out eager fingers, touched the bush.

Bridgeen caught her breath and glanced around for some sign, but for the moment, there was none. The only moving things she saw were two belated bees, which, rising heavily laden from the sweetbriar bush at her side, buzzing and tumbling, started for home; and in the grass at her feet, a busy little brown spider was measuring off the outlines of a net and stopped now and then to listen, one slender arm lifted. The colleen looked reproachfully toward the white stone upon which had perched the Leprechaun. There it still shone dimly amongst the swaying rushes.

"The time is past, and she isn't here. Oh, I wonder if she'll come," grieved Bridgeen.

As if in answer to the thought, the rushes bowed low to the ground, and over their heads swept a cool wind that lifted the curls on the child's brow. Or was it the wind? Was it not rather soft, caressing fingers that were smoothing the brown hair back from her forehead?

Bridgeen started to her knees with a sobbing, laughing cry of "Mother! Mother! My own mother!"

For there, bending over her, was the white, gentle face she loved best in all the world. Never before had the child seen so much tenderness and peaceful happiness shining in the dear, patient eyes. Crying and laughing, Bridgeen flung herself into the arms outstretched for her.

"Bridgeen asthore, acushla, machree!" Though the voice was as soft as the voice of the wind, it still held the same lingering tenderness that had soothed and comforted a thousand griefs and sorrows. And wonder of wonders, slowly about her shoulders closed the remembered pressure of her mother's arms.

And now, with her head once more in its old place upon her mother's breast, all the cares, all the heartaches were forgotten.

"Your lonesome cry brings me thus visible to you, alannah!"

"O Mother, I've wanted you so much!" murmured Bridgeen with a sigh of measureless joy and relief.

"But don't you know I am never away from you, asthore? I've felt every tear that you have shed, and every grief of your heart has been a pain to me."

"Oh, if I had only known that, Mother, I wouldn't have grieved. I thought you were away from us entirely," cried the child.

"Listen, Bridgeen, and mark my words," the mother warned, "for the time is short and I've many things to tell you."

And then, with faces close, the two talked earnestly about many important things: how willingly Bridgeen must obey her father; how careful she must be to keep the stirabout from burning in the morning; but, above all, how watchful she must be to keep her brother Jamesy away from the fire. The colleen promised faithfully not to forget. And so they talked on lovingly, happily together.

At last the mother said, "It is the children's bedtime, and you must be my own brave daughter and go to them. Keep well in your mind what I have said; be cheerful and contented, for we are not separated. And listen, mavourneen!

"Tomorrow— the morning we had so long hoped for and planned for together, the day of your Confirmation— though you will not see me there, still I'll be kneeling happy at your side."

"Mother, I'll be contened and happy always now. Indeed, indeed, I will."

"Now hurry home, mavourneen," the mother whispered. "Run straight on without looking back. Have no fear, and remember!" Bridgeen felt a kiss on her forehead, and she knew that her mother was gone.

So, her happy heart filled with satisfied longings, without once turning her head, she ran out into the fields, her spirit growing lighter and lighter at every step.

On and on Bridgeen hurried, picking up her father's brogues as she passed the stile; and she never tarried till she came to her own door.

There she found waiting for her, all bristling with excitement, Kathleen, Norah, Jamesy and Paudeen, and they were carefully guarding a long, white, pasteboard box, held jealously between them.

"Oh, Bridgeen, Father Cassidy was just here, an' he said he met the Leprechaun, an' he left this box an' said he'd skiver Jamesy for pokin' at the fire, an' for us all not to so much as lay a finger on the knot of the cord till you came home." It was Kathleen who spoke.

With shaking fingers and amid eager proffers of help from Kathleen, Norah, Jamesy, and even little Paudeen, the string was untied and the lid lifted. And what do you think was in that same box?

Why, nothing else but the prettiest white dress and veil and wreath ever worn in the parish of Ballinderg.

The next morning, the good old archbishop leaned over Bridgeen Daley where she knelt.

He thought that in all the years of his life, he had never seen so happy a face.

And do you wonder that to this day, Bridgeen will listen to no doubting or unkind word spoken of the Leprechaun?

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## 5: The Monks of Saint Bride

THERE was a decent bit of a man, yer honor, named Michael Bresnahan, who, till a few years ago, lived over in that little fisher village under the cliff, and he had a good, sensible lump of a woman for a wife, named Katie.

No one could say a word against Katie; she was thrifty, she was clean, she was hardworking— only she used to be faulting Michael, and faulting him, and faulting. If the decent man happened home of an evening with a sign of a little drop of drink on him, one would think from the way Katie went on that it was after robbing a church he was.

Well, one day, Michael said to himself that he'd bear it no longer, so he up and went to his wife's relations, especially her sisters' husbands, to ask their advice about what he should do. They pitied him, indeed— sure, no one could do less— but all the counsel they could scrape together to give the unfortunate man was just the kind of encouragement relations always give: "Arrah, God help ye, me poor man, don't I know, and bear it the best ye can!"

Well, there wasn't much comfort in that, so Michael put in the next day going around, asking the neighbors what he'd do with Katie, and everyone freely gave the advice the neighbors always give under such circumstances: "Musha, God help ye, me poor man, and ye're a fool for standing it!"

Now, taking public advice on family matters soon grows into a pleasant habit with anyone, so, after Michael had exhausted the cottages on both sides of the village street, he took the road in his hands, and was making his way down to Haggarty's public house at the crossroads, when who should he meet up with, ambling along on the gray pony, but his reverence, Father John Driscoll.

"This is me chance to get in the first word before Katie sees his riverence," he thought.

And what does the blundering lad do but stop the priest in the middle of the road and there make his bitter complaint. That was the rock Michael split on, for the clergyman, without a word of warning, up with his whip and hit Bresnahan two rousing welts over the legs, and then when the poor man took to his heels, Father Driscoll galloped after, at every jump of his pony larruping Michael down the road and calling him such heart-scalding names that the very crows wouldn't pick his bones. You'd pity the state he was in after, and he sitting by the hedge rubbing his smarting legs.

"There don't seem to be any rale appreciation of a good man in this worruld," he whimpered.

That same night, Michael made up his mind to do something tremendous. So, bright and early the next morning, the desperate man slipped from the blue teapot on the dresser the last shilling in the house, and taking the road in his hands again off with him to Ballinderg to get the grand advice from Sheelah Maguire, the fairy doctor. It's she that was the deep-knowing crachure. And the advice that Sheelah gave him would raise the hair on your head: "Hand me the shillin'! All Souls' night'll be here soon, and whin it comes, d'ye go up to the monastery of Saint Bride an' help the monks, an' they'll help you."

If one goes to the Fairies for counsel and afterwards doesn't follow what he's bid, it's certain sure he'll find himself twice as bad off as ever before.

When Michael heard that same advice, the cold sweat broke out on his forehead, for no man in five hundred years had ever been bold enough to face the monks of Saint Bride.

Where are the monks of Saint Bride, is it, yer honor? Why, God rest their souls, they're dead hundreds of years! That old ruin up on the cliff is where the monastery used to be.

Troth and I must tell you of the monks of Saint Bride, or you'll never be able to rightly appreciate the terrible thing that happened to Michael Bresnahan that Halloween night.

So you see that high bare cliff beyant?— Aill Ruahd they do be calling it— well, in the days when the five kings ruled over Ireland— and many a year ago that was— Black Roderick O'Carrioll with three hundred of his fighting men lived perched upon the very pinpoint of the hill. Right opposite, on that other bold headland where you see the ruins lying tumbled, dwelt the far-famed Monks of Saint Bride. And just as you see it now, between their stout old monastery and the castle of the O'Carrioll, the blue sea curved in like the half of a cartwheel.

Barring these two habitations, there wasn't another strong house within forty miles; but only the cottages of the cowherds and of the swineherds and the low mud huts of the kerns.

However, it's little the O'Carrioll cared for near neighbors, and it's little he bothered the monks with his visiting, and as for the monks, it's far from being sorry the holy men were to have the O'Carrioll keeping that way to himself.

A fierce proud man was Black Roderick, and the greatest pleasure he took in life was in leading a hundred or two of his spears over the walls of some nobleman's castle and leaving its roof glowing blood red against the midnight sky.

But though half the province of Leinster hated and feared the O'Carrioll, it wasn't that way at all with him in his own household, for, whatever was the reason, with all his stern, cold ways, there was many a man-at-arms who sat at the chief's table that would willingly have laid down his life to serve Black Roderick. But if the chief himself had any great liking for his men, he wasn't the one to be making much talk about it, and indeed they used to be saying that there was but one mortal man that he showed any fondness for and that same his only brother, the yellow-haired, pleasant-faced young Turlough. And it was no wonder for him to be fond of the lad the way he was, for a brighter-minded, comelier young fellow there wasn't to be found in the seven counties. Indeed, it's more like father and son the two men were than like brother and brother.

All their days, they lived that way together, with their foraging and their games and their hunting and their feasting, happy and contented enough, I dare say, though it's little enough attention the two paid to prayers or to fasting or to any other pious thing. Nor at Christmas, nor Easter, nor on any other holy day did either of the two go next or near the monastery chapel of Saint Bride.

In that way, they kept their lawless lives, living to themselves, for themselves, and not caring a ha'porth for Heaven or the crack of a finger for Hell. Sometimes on dark nights, when the torches would be glimmering on the far cliff, the old abbot would sadly shake his head. "Let them see to it," he would mutter. "What can anyone expect from the likes of that but misfortune on earth and torment hereafter."

Well, the misfortune came at last, and when it did, a bitter, burning, incurable misfortune it was.

One black midnight, the holy monks were awakened by a great noise of confused shouting and cheering passing along the road in the valley below them. And what should the good men see but the flare of a hundred torches held high by O'Carrioll's men above a dim crush of hard-driven cattle.

"The O'Carrioll is home from his raiding," said Brother John. "I wonder who this time was the unfortunate that felt the edge of his sword."

"God rest his soul the night, wherever he lies," sighed Brother Andrew. "And isn't it the marvel that Heaven has spared the heartless spoiler so long!"

While the monks stood wondering what depredation Black Roderick was after doing, there suddenly fell a hard rapping upon the convent gate, and a voice strident as a trumpet startled the monastery: "Open! Open, I say! 'Tis the O'Carrioll bids ye!"

Straightway there buzzed a hurried consultation among the brown brothers at the gate. While some were for letting him in, others brought staves and scythes and one hid a sword under his robe.

However, at last the drawbridge was let down, indeed, and the gate was opened, as needs must be, and then two shadowy horses crossed the wide moat and stumbled into the abbey court.

First of all plunged the O'Carrioll himself on the tall black horse that people used to be saying could fight as well as his master. And the figure of a woman is what Roderick carried in front of him, and she wrapped in his wide cloak; and at the black steed's haunches, on a panting white mare, rode Turlough, the brother, and by the strange, wild look on his face, the monks thought at first that maybe it was a deep wound that was on him and that it was for a leech the two men were coming.

"Quick, Sir Abbott!" cried the dark man. "Out with your book, and marry the both of us here, for when this lady crosses my threshold, I wish her to go as my wife. That much I'll do for her father's daughter." So saying, he dismounted and helped his burden to the ground, and standing beside the girl, lifted her hand in his and then sternly waited.

And Brother Paul was telling the next day how when Black Roderick took the lady's hand, young Turlough's face went deadly white and the lad's fingers made a sudden stealthy reach toward the sword hilt at his side; and sure everyone saw how the colleen (it's little more than a child she was) tottered and would have fallen if the O'Carrioll himself had not held her up.

I never rightly heard the truth about the three of them, but I think there must have been something before that time between Turlough and the young colleen. Who was the lady and how came the friendship between herself and young Turlough was, you may be sure, more than a nine days' wonder at Saint Bride's.

One morning, a rumor reached the monastery that the colleen was the O'Coffey's daughter, and that she had been stolen out of the West, but that couldn't be true, because the O'Coffey's daughter was being reared in France. And after that, some pilgrims were saying that the lady might be the child of the O'Donavon from Munster, but if that were true, half of Ireland would have been in arms against the O'Carrioll. Even Black Roderick wouldn't have dared the O'Donavon. So one way and another, the matter was bothering the friars at their beads and distracting them at their vespers till they could get no good of their prayers.

News traveled slowly in those old days, and he was a bold man that journeyed far from home. So weeks went by and no word drifted through the monastery walls about the bride, when lo and behold, one morning about three months after the wedding, an astonishing thing happened: the Lady O'Carrioll herself, and no other, came riding across the drawbridge again. This time, however, she rode hurrying alone up the winding path, her mist of brown hair streaming in the wind and a look of terror frozen on her white face. At the same time rushed, galloping in furious pursuit, Lord Roderick O'Carrioll.

"Open and let me in," she called to the warder. "I claim the protection of this holy place."

And the draw was let down to her when they heard that cry, but when she rode over the bridge, the O'Carrioll already galloped at her heels, and when they drew bridle in the midst of the crowd of curious friars, one horse's head tossed beside the other horse's head.

The man's eyes gleamed on her like coals of living fire, and what he said was: "Is it to escape you thought you would? Return to your house and to your duty, shameless woman!"

The Lady O'Carrioll didn't answer him then, but slipped quickly down from the horse, and it's on her two bended knees she went before the abbot.

"I claim your protection! Save me, Sir Abbot," she implored.

The old monk looked in stern amazement from the dark, threatening brow of the angry man to the death-white checks of the girl at his feet.

"Stop where you are, O'Carrioll," was what he said as the chief dismounted, "and come not a foot nearer, for, though I'm a priest of God, now if you so much as lift a finger to this woman, it's little help that sword you're striving to draw will be to ye then."

At that the abbot turned, and it's what he called to the warder: "Brother John, raise the drawbridge." And while the bridge was clanking up, a score of stalwart monks armed, some with staves, some with spears, and two or three with naked swords, crowded hurrying up and grouped themselves around their abbot. "And now, Roderick O'Carrioll," demanded the soldierly old friar, "what means this rude pursuit?"

"By the cross, it's what it means, that she is a disobedient wife," haughtily replied the O'Carrioll, "and it's more than that you shall not know."

"It's more than that I shall know indeed," said the abbot, "for unless you swear by the cross on your sword-hilt never to harm a hair of the woman's head,

it's not one foot she'll stir beyond this gate. And if your men shall try a rescue, 'tis your own corpse that they'll bear away."

"Most willingly do I take that oath," spoke the O'Carrioll, "though it's not through any dread of this nest of scurrying brown mice. An O'Carrioll never did anything yet through fear; but I'll take the oath you say to ease the fears of this woman. Unworthy as she is, I love her."

And straightway, holding up the gold hilt of his sword, he swore by it, blunt and plain like a soldier, to keep her safe from any hurt or harm or shame that might come through himself or through another.

The lady dropped her tear-wet hands from her white face and, unassisted, rose to her feet. Not a word did she utter, but the proud, hopeless look of her eyes would wring one's heart.

And the two rode silently away together.

"Now may God forgive us all," cried Brother Andrew, the youngest of the monks. "We've done a craven thing to let him take her from this shelter."

"Not so," answered the abbott. "It's safer for her to go. The man will keep his oath."

The monks of Saint Bride never saw her again, and for two months, it's little they heard of her, and then a dark rumor crept over the valley. And when two cowherds stood together out on the lonely hills, they whispered the rumor to each other, and when any two men were alone together in their currach on the ocean, they talked of it, and it's what they said: "The O'Carrioll has reddened his hands with his wife, and he has reddened his hands with his brother Turlough that she had the love for, and the both of them are lying beside each other, cold and dead, at the bottom of the sea."

At last one day, a fisherman found a lady's blue cloak washed up between two rocks, and it was the Lady O'Carrioll's gold-embroidered cloak, they were saying. They brought that cloak to the monastery.

Now, when the abbot of Saint Bride heard this thing and of the way the sword oath that had been put upon the O'Carrioll was broken, it's great indeed the wrath that was on the good man, for such treachery never had been heard of before in all Ireland.

The evening of the day that the blue cloak was brought to him, he called all the monks together in the chapel, and there they consulted one with the other what was a just and worthy punishment to put upon the O'Carrioll. It was the turn of midnight before they decided that and went to their cells. And then on the morning of the morrow, just when the great round sun was reddening the

foreheads of the hills, they all gathered again on the east turret of the monastery, and when the abbot found that they were all about him, he fronted the castle of the O'Carrioll and raised his oaken cross. Then he cursed that house, and he cursed the chief of that house. And it wasn't the O'Carrioll alone he cursed, but he banned him and all who cleaved to him with the curse of sleepless nights, which is the most agonizing of all curses, and he doomed them with the curse of friendless days, which is the most terrible of all curses, and he cursed them with the might of a quick-coming death, which is the surest of all curses. And he put excommunication upon the lord of the castle, so that he would be banished from out of the ways of living man.

And the abbot sent Brother Paul and Brother Philip over to the castle, and the two holy friars repeated to the O'Carrioll and to his retainers the terrible curse and the words of excommunication.

So no wonder it is at all, at all, that quick and heavy that curse fell. For from that day out, the kerns began to steal away from Black Roderick's land, the way they were afraid of the curse; and the fighting men deserted him, at first by twos and three and then by scores; and then the women of the house crept away in the night; so that presently he that used to be counting five hundred spears was left with but a dozen or so of the old retainers.

And that is how Black Roderick's power went from him, so that he was forced at last to pay tribute to the O'Driscolls, that he might save the roof of his castle from the torches of the MacDonoughs.

And that's the way, too, it befell with him when the red plague came sweeping up from Ath Cliath, as they used to be calling the city of Dublin then, and it leaving in its track no living man, woman, or child.

One morning, six men lay dead in the castle of the O'Carrioll, and within the hour, the master of the house, in the way that he would be ready if his own turn came, sent a quick messenger over for one of the monks of Saint Bride to come and shrive him. But the abbot sent a stern answer back, and it's what he said: "Let Roderick O'Carrioll come himself to this monastery, and on his bare knees make public confession of the murder of his brother and of his wife, and full acknowledgment of his other crimes, and then let him humbly take on himself the penance I'll impose— and it's no light penance that will be either. And let him not be sending here for a priest again, for it's to the chapel he himself must come, and it's my own tongue and no other that shall ask the forgiveness for him, and until I do that same, it's unshriven he will be, and it's neither ease for his body, nor rest for his soul, he may expect in this world or in the next."

When the frightened messenger went back and told that, it's what the O'Carrioll answered: "It's a hard saying, that is, and the curse they put on me I send back to them, and let it be laid against their souls that, as I am innocent of the crime they say, they shall pray for me until I am blessed, whether in this world or in the next!"

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he felt the sickness of the plague on him, and he turned to the serving-men and what he said was: "The hand of death is on me now, and after all, I'd wish to die at peace with God, and I'm not guilty of the crime they lay against me, so put me on the litter there and carry me with what haste you can to the monastery of Saint Bride. And when they hear what I have to say, it's well I know they'll shrive me then."

And the serving-men were loath to go, for the night was on, and it was All Souls' night, and wild with the wind and the thunder and the rain. But for love of the old times, they took the master up between them at last, and it's how they carried him out into the darkness, and down into the valley, and by every short way toward the monastery.

By the time the serving-men had reached the path on the edge of the high cliff, which was halfway between the two places, they were as frightened as four shivering hares, and they set down the litter to rest themselves. When they did that, there sprang across the sky a long flame of green lightning, and when it was over, a man of them said: "We need go no further; the O'Carrioll is dead." And they crossed themselves then, but not one of them dared say, "God have mercy on his soul," because of the curse that was on him. Then one of them said, "What shall we do with him now?"

And the waves were leaping up against the rocks, the way they were striving to drag the men down into sea.

Then the oldest of them answered, and what he said was: "The sea is calling for him, because he cannot be buried in the consecrated ground. We shall bury him in the sea."

So they flung him far out over the cliff, and the strong waves of the green sea leaped up to meet him as he fell, and there was his grave.

At sunrise, on the morning of the morrow, the red plague stalked into the monastery of Saint Bride, and the first token of its presence was when it put its hot breath upon the old abbot himself so that he withered within the hour. And it's the dying that was burying the dead from that hour on, until the last friar of them all, with his spade in his hand, tumbled, stricken into a half-filled grave.

Then the loneliness and bleakness of desolation settled down on miles of hills and leagues of plains. For three times ten years, the deer browsed under the castle walls, and the badgers dug their lairs in the dry monastery moat; and then the O'Broders sent their herds and their cattle and their swine down into the fat grasslands which for so long had lain fallow. But for years after that, no one had the courage in his four bones to take shelter in the castle or the monastery, for fear of the sickness and the misfortune that was on the two places.

But after a time, there came an old swineherd of the O'Broders— Brown Shamus, he was called— and on winter nights, he used to be driving his pigs into the castle yard and to be building a great blaze on the hearth of the hall, the way he would be sleeping in the warmth of it.

One night, as he sat huddled before the fire, with his chin on his knees, there fell a hard rap on the hall door behind him. Brown Shamus never turned his head, for he'd often heard sounds like that before at night in the castle, and he had seen strange shapes, and well he knew that it's from the grave they were, and what he'd do then was to be shutting his eyes and striving not to be thinking of them. In that way, they never bothered him.

But the rap came again, and after it a blast of cold air. By that, Shamus knew the door was open. He turned around then, and what he saw was a very old man and a very old woman, and they were perishing with the cold. At that, Shamus began on his prayers, for he made no doubt but what it was two spirits standing ferninst him.

Then the old man, seeing the fright that was on Shamus, spoke up, and it's what he said: "Have no fear, swineherd of the brown beard. It is I, Turlough O'Carrioll; and this is the Lady O'Carrioll, my brother's wife, that has come back with me."

At that, the terror was all the greater on Shamus, for he was sure the two had been dead at the bottom of the sea those forty years. But when they drew nearer to the fire, and he heard the fall of their shoes on the stones of the floor, he knew by that it was living creatures they were, for the others that used to be coming and going there made no sound at all on the stones.

And sure enough, Turlough O'Carrioll it was, coming back after all these years, and his brother's wife along with him. Instead of being murdered and killed, as the report was out, they had taken a currach at night, and had slipped away to foreign parts, where they lived together until the hour I'm telling you about. And the pride of Black Roderick O'Carrioll, and his bitter shame, and maybe a bit of love for the both of them as well, had kept their flight and their crime secret; even

when the dark man was excommunicated, and cursed, and forsaken on account of them, he made no sign. Sure you can never tell what good or evil thing is working hidden inside the mind of a man.

How long Turlough and the Lady O'Carrioll remained living it's not very sure. It may have been one year, or it may have been two years, but it wasn't very long. At any rate, the two of them died and were put in the one grave, and that was the end of the world for them, and they came back no more. You may see the wide, brownstone flag that covers them to this day in the churchyard of the monastery, for they were laid in consecrated ground.

And wouldn't it have been a good thing, too, if Roderick O'Carrioll, and the monks of Saint Bride with him, could have found untroubled graves in consecrated ground? But an unjust curse is a dreadful thing. And through five hundred years, as sure as the night of All Souls came, the friars of the abbey, and the lord of the castle, made bitter penance for their sin.

The dead make no account of time, they say and, indeed, why should they? And so, one generation followed another generation, and the story of the curse came down with the years, and the weary penance kept still unfinished.

By and by, the lonely castle of the O'Carrioll melted away in the sun and the snow. One by one, its great stones were rolled down the mountainside to build the fishers' village of Killgillam, which was growing up on the ribbon of sandy beach below— the same village that I was telling you about, where Michael Bresnahan lived.

But no man proved hardy enough to take a single stone from the haunted abbey, for fear of the bad luck it might bring him. So it, too, crumbled away in the sun and in the storms, but the gray rocks that tumbled lay where they fell.

And many's the strange whisper that went around about things that were seen at night on the top of that lonely hill. And I myself knew a very truthful old man who once lived in that village, and his name was Thomas O'Deegan, and this is what he told me: One All Souls' night, when he drifted out on the bay alone, fixing his nets, and the wind fluttered in sweeps down from the face of the cliff, he heard the sound of many voices chanting together, and it was the litany for the dead, they were singing.

Now, it's in the prayer book, as everyone knows, that the living may pray for the dead, and the dead may pray for the living, but the sorrow of it is that the dead may not pray for the dead. It's a queer way that is, but they do be saying that there's a stranger thing still, and I'm greatly bothered sometimes to know the reason, and it's what it is: Though the dead cannot pray for the dead, if one

among the living say a prayer for the departed, then the dead may join his prayer to that same living prayer, and so as it makes one prayer, they'll both be heard.

And this was the penance that was put on the monks of Saint Bride: Once a year, upon All Souls' night— the night O'Carrioll died— they were to come out of their graves, every one, and to pray for the dead man's soul, and this until the day of judgment, with no release, unless some living voice would join itself to their dead voices.

And it was a punishment put upon Black Roderick, too, for his red deeds, that his soul should attend them there and find no ease until it felt the blessing of the abbot of Saint Bride. And so the useless prayers went on through all the generations— for sure, what man in all the country felt brave enough to climb that lonely road at midnight on Halloween?

So by this time, yer honor will understand the hard task that Sheelah Maguire put upon Michael Bresnahan: He must go alone, d'ye mind, at midnight of All Souls', to the ruined monastery and there face the unhappy spirits of the monks of Saint Bride, and join his living prayers with their own, over the body of Black Roderick.

On the way home from Ballinderg, after seeing Sheelah, Michael turned over and over in his mind the advice the fairy doctor had given him, and it's what he decided at last: "Well, after all, I think I'd better try to stand the faulting of Katie for a while longer, and if the worst comes to the worst," said the persecuted man to himself, "maybe I'll stop a trifle of the drink for peace sake." With that, he tossed the matter from his mind and decided to do the best he could with Katie.

Be that as it may, one afternoon not long after, as the lad was on his way home from the village of Ballyslane (where he was after selling a fine cow to his uncle, Ned Corrigan, who kept the public house by the bridge), he took for a shortcut home the path along the cliff. When he reached the top of the hill, there fell a queer weariness on him, maybe from his journey and a bit of a weakness as well, so he stopped to clear his wits and to rest awhile on the sunny side of the old abbey. In that way, maybe he could with a clear head meet Katie. Trouble never stayed long at a time with the lad. As he sat comfortably reclining with his back to the wall and smoking his pipe, the boy could see far down below him the little village straggle lazily along the yellow beach. About a stone's throw out from the edge of the green cliff stood his own white cottage, with the gray nets drying on its roof, and he could make out, too, Katie moving around in the thumbnail of a garden, with one of the children clinging to her petticoat, and it's what he thought: "Oh, wouldn't I be the foolish man to be going down there now the way I

am, with the sign of the drop of drink on me, after the hard warning about the public houses she was putting on me when I went away this morning! No, no, Michael, take my advice, be a wise lad, and do you go in there now to the old chapel, where no one will be seeing you, and take a matter of forty winks or so, the way you'll have a sober and a clear head going down to her while it is still in the light of the evening."

So saying, Michael rose, stepped carefully over the fallen arch stones that blocked the doorway of the ruined chapel, and, after picking out a soft, green mound for a pillow on the sunny side of the wall, laid himself down and fell asleep. But sure, it wasn't forty winks nor forty hundred winks the poor man took. The afternoon shadowed into evening, and the evening darkened into night, and Michael says he was sleeping like one of the cold stones when, suddenly, something like the skim of a bird's wing, or the brush of a garment passing across his face, startled every vein in his body, and he was wide awake at once and sitting up.

The full moon was sailing swiftly out to sea through a bank of fleecy clouds, and it took a wondering second or two to place rightly in the lad's mind the tumbled, roofless walls, and the tall, broken arches of the ruin. And it's ghostly and solemn enough the place was, too, in the moonlight, with the sighing of the wind in the yew trees, and the whispering of the restless ivy on the walls, and far away the lonesome chirping of a cricket.

As Bresnaham hesitated, round-eyed and breathless, suddenly from the gaping tower of the abbey, soft and muffled, stole the boom of a tolling bell. Its toll was like the hollow moan of the shoal bell when the fog lies heavy on the sea; it was the mere ghost of a sound. This was strange, for no mortal's bell ever was heard within six miles of the spot.

"My grief and my woe, where am I at all, at all?" he began. "And what's this awful place?" The jump of his heart up into his throat took the breath from his lips, for the truth flashed into Michael's mind that this was the ruined abbey on the cliff where he had lain down for a minute's sleep; and, O Father in Heaven, wasn't tonight All Souls' night, when the terrible monks of Saint Bride walked in their awful penance?

The tolling ceased.

"The saints preserve us, 'tis the abbey!" whispered Michael. "Maybe I'll be able to slip down there before they come." He was half to his feet when there broke from the court outside the chapel a low, wailing cry that froze the blood in his heart. It was as if someone in deep torment were begging for a drop of pity.

"Remember not his iniquities," pleaded the terrible voice, "nor let Thine anger encompass him."

Instantly the mournful chant of many lips, like the swelling moan of the ocean, took up the response of the litany: "O Lord, we beseech Thee to hear us."

Michael crouched breathless behind a broken pillar. To the day of his death, the bitter beseeching of that litany rang in his ears.

"From Thy wrath and from everlasting death," wailed the first supplicant.

Then the response, growing wild and dismal as the winter wind: "O Lord, deliver him."

"I'm lost," groaned Michael. " 'Tis the monks of Saint Bride, and they're coming in." Twice he tried to look, but the courage wasn't in him, so he just huddled there, cowering. At the same time, the ghostly chant kept swelling nearer and nearer, and every wild prayer for the dead, with its pitiful response, went driving through the heart of poor Bresnahan.

Presently he felt that the monks were near the chapel door behind him, and compelled by very terror, Michael glanced shrinkingly back over his shoulder.

By this time, the great white moon was flinging a soft, steady light over the old ruin, and clearly, through the archway of the chapel, the crouching man saw approaching a sight terrible for mortal eyes.

Marching two by two, moved a shadowy procession of brown-robed monks, and they chanting the litany for the dead as they came. The specters walked with arms folded, and each bowed head was hidden in its cowl. There must have been fifty of them. The fallen stones along their way made no hindrance to their feet any more than if those same stones had been moon-shadows.

A few paces in front of the procession, slow, solemn, and silent, the abbot advanced alone, a tall, stately figure. Just behind him, four monks carried something between them on a litter. As the abbot entered the ruined chapel, soft and low again, the bell in the tower began tolling.

Michael saw that they were going to pass by within a yard of him, so he strained every nerve and sinew to move aside, but the arms and legs of the poor lad were as heavy and had as little life in them as the stones lying scattered about the ground. When the monks drew near, the night air grew cold and damp and close as an open vault.

"Out of Thy great pity, pardon his infirmities," chanted the abbot.

"O Lord, we beseech Thee to hear us," answered the monks.

When they were within five feet of him, Michael could see the abbot's hands crossed humbly upon the sunken breast; and, oh, achone mavrone! they were the

long, thin, fleshless hands of a skeleton. Then he might have put out his hand and touched the dreadful shape.

One face in all the ghastly train was visible as it slowly passed, and that one was the still, white face of a dead man who was being carried by on the bier. And a terrible thing he was to see, with his long, silken tunic dripping wet from the sea-brine, and the heavy seaweed clinging to him.

"Merciful Father!" gasped Bresnahan. "Isn't it Black Roderick himself that I'm looking at, an' him dhrownded and dead these five hundred years?"

It's well Michael Bresnahan marked that, as the monks passed him by, not one of them cast a shadow on the ground. And they turned neither to the right nor to the left, nor changed their pace, nor made any kind of sign till they reached the place where the old altar used to be standing. There they stopped, and the four bearers set the litter on the ground. The bell ceased tolling. Even the crickets shrank into a frightened silence. Michael's breath came in faint sobs.

It was the abbot himself, then, that moved solemnly to the head of the bier, and, kneeling down as though before an altar, stretched wide his arms. He was praying there, but what he said Michael couldn't hear because the chanting had begun again. But at any rate, there they all were, the helpless dead praying for the helpless dead. Here was the chance at last for poor Bresnahan to escape. And so he made one mighty effort. With teeth chattering and knees quaking, the lad turned himself round and began creeping over toward the black, gaping archway. Barely was he able to climb the fallen stones.

There isn't a doubt but what Michael, if he had had the strength, would have opened his lips and prayed aloud with the monks, for he remembered the legend well of how the tormented spirits needed only a living voice to join its prayer with their own, that way they would have rest in quiet graves, but the fear lay too heavy on the poor man, and he couldn't do that.

But just as he reached the archway, the heartbroken wail rose higher and higher and more despairing, so that he could bear the sorrow of it no longer, and, turning where he stood, he bent his knees and fiercely cried aloud with the others, "O Lord, we beseech Thee to hear us."

Those were the happy words. Instantly the chant ceased. The abbot rose from his knees and flung his arms to the sky. The man from the bier was kneeling beside the abbot. A sudden glow illuminated the chapel. Michael waited to see no more.

As Bresnahan scrambled over the fallen stones of the threshold and darted down the hill with all the strength of his legs, the wail of the solemn chant for the

dead had changed for the glorious burst of the Te Deum Laudamus. And no wonder: the curse was broken, the punishment of the centuries was ended, for the prayer of the living had been joined to the prayer of the dead. In that way, Bresnahan knew that the spirits were released from their penance. And ye may not believe it, but it's as true as the Book that, from that good day to this, the monks of Saint Bride walk the ruin no more.

As for Katie Bresnahan, the kindhearted woman, when she heard of the great miracle that her husband, Michael, had performed that night, she quit faulting him about the little drop of liquor he used to be taking, and on account of all that had happened to him, Michael grew to be a hero throughout the countryside and was looked up to as a knowledgable man to the day he died.

Naturally he walked happy in this new and deserved importance. There remained but one thorn in his side. Whenever he chanced to meet up with Father Driscoll on the highway, the suspicious-minded priest would only laugh and shake the riding whip at him. Everyone else paid him his due of dignified respect.

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## 6: Killbohgan and Killboggan

ONCE upon a time, and a black-fortuned, potato-blighted time it was, there lived near the town of Clonmel, in the beautiful County of Tipperary, a sober-minded farmer named Jerry O'Flynn.

Of cattle or horses or sheep or goats or any four-footed beasts, Jerry had none, saving and barring a beautiful white pig which he had picked up at his own threshold on a blustery evening in April, when it was a little, stray, shivering, pink-nosed bonive.

Well, that same pig grew and grew, fat and silky and good-natured, till it was the pride and the pleasure of the family to currycomb him, to wash him, to feed him, and to rub his fine broad back. And when the time came for him to go the way of all pigs, Jerry's thatched roof covered as sore-hearted a family as dwelt in all Ireland. However, the piteous law which compels the strong to prey upon the weak, was in this instance considered to be inexorable; so, the evening before the day of execution, Jerry repaired to a secluded spot behind the high, black, turf stack and there, with his own unwilling hands, arranged the grim paraphernalia for the morrow's tragedy. When this dismal work was finished, the honest fellow had not enough courage left to carry himself back to the cottage, there to face the accusing eyes of his children; so he slunk over to the stile in the lane and stood with his right arm thrown listlessly about the hedge post, lost in troubled contemplation of the unconscious and confiding victim who stretched himself luxuriously in the grass at his master's feet.

So preoccupied was the lad with his bothersome thoughts, that he failed to notice the hasty approach of good-natured old Mrs. Clancey, and he answered her cheery "God save ye" with a half-frightened start.

"I've come to tell ye, Jerry agra," the excited woman panted, "that there's a letther— a big blue letther— from Amerikay— waitin' for ye down in the town; and the postmasther (bad cess to him) wouldn't let me have it to bring to you. He even rayfused to open it for me, so I might bring ye the news who it was from. The curse of the crows light on him!" She spoke with such hearty bitterness as to suggest a keenly disappointed curiosity.

"Thank ye, and thank ye ag'in for your throuble, Mrs. Clancey! You're sure the letther was from Amerikay?"

"Oh, faith I am; the postmasther hilt it up, an' more than a dozen of us saw the postmark."

"My, but that's quare," muttered Jerry. "I have no one in Amerikay who could be afther sending me a letther, barrin' me Uncle Dan, and Dan's dead an' gone, Heaven rest him, these two years. I'm bilin' to know who the letther's from, but I can't go afther it the morrow bekase," and he sighed deeply, "we've set that day for the killin' of Char-les, the pig there. And it's a red-handed murdherer I feel meself already, Mrs. Clancey ma'am."

Well, at these words, strange as it may seem, Char-les gave a startled grunt, rose to his fat haunches, and threw a look of such resentful surprise from under his white eyelashes, first at Jerry, and then at Mrs. Clancey, that the old woman, with a muttered "God save us, will ye look at that now," shrank back a pace from the stile.

"I wouldn't kill that pig, Jerry O'Flynn," says she, with a wag of her forefinger. "I wouldn't kill that pig if he was as full of goold suverings as the Bank of England, Ireland, and Scotland put together, so I wouldn't!"

The smouldering trouble in Jerry's gray eyes deepened, and he sucked hard at his empty, black pipe.

"And why wouldn't ye, Mrs. Clancey ma'am? What raysons have ye agin him?" asked Jerry, peering anxiously at her from under the rim of his old caubeen. Mrs. Clancey deliberately folded her arms in her shawl, and came a step nearer the stile.

"Well, first and foremost," says she, "he is a shupernatural baste, and there's a knowledgeableness in the cock of his white eye when he turns it on me that makes me shiver, so it does. Just look at him sittin' there now! Look at the saygacious twisht of the tail of him. I'll warrant he ondherstands every worrud we're thinkin', let alone sayin'— conshuming to him."

Jerry threw an apprehensive eye over his shoulder at the pig who now sat with his back toward them, solemnly twisting his tail first this way, then that. But for all his seeming indifference, there was such a subtle suggestion of listening in the twitch of the beast's ears and the hump of his broad shoulders, that Jerry placed a cautious hand to his mouth when he whispered, "Do ye think so, Mrs. Clancey? No, no, it's only just the natural cultivaytion of the baste. Though I'll not deny that Char-les has sometimes the look of a Christian on him. Then, again, his ways are so friendly and polite that it goes sore agin me heart to lift a hand till him, so, it does. Sure, pigs have feelings as well as you or I, and you wouldn't like to be kilt yourself, Mrs. Clancey, I'm thinkin'."

The unhappy personal comparison offended Mrs. Clancey's ever-sensitive dignity, so with head askew and tight lips she replied, "If I wor a pig, which

Heaven forbid, I hope I'd be philosopher enough to be satisfied with me station in loife. Pigs were born to be kilt; how else could they be turned into things needful? 'Tis the least they can expect."

"Thrue fer ye!" apologetically sighed Jerry. "And to substantiate what ye're sayin', there's the rint long due, an' Christmas almost on top of us, and the childher needin' shoes, an' herself fairly perishin' for a bit of a bonnet; an' look at him! There sits tay, an' bonnet, an' shoes, an' rint, an' lashin's an' lavin's of tabaccy; and here am I wid an empty poipe, too tindherhearted to transmogrify the baste. What'll I do at all, at all?"

"Faith, I dunno, Jerry me bouchal. It's beyant me," replied Mrs. Clancey, turning to go. "But"— and a sudden thought halted her—"tomorrow is market day at Clonmel, and if that same Char-les wor my pig, I'd have him halfway there before the sun stuck a leg over the mountain, an' I'd sell him widout the flutther of an eyelid. By that manes, ye'd shift the raysponsibility onto himself. And if Char-les is half as wise as he purtinds to be, lave him alone, but he'll take care of himself."

With a self-satisfied toss of her head and a cheerful "Good night," the wise woman took herself hurriedly up the road.

Jerry leaned heavily on the stile and gazed with unseeing eyes at the brown shawl fast disappearing in the shadows, until he was startled by two short, indignant grunts at his side. Looking quickly around, he met the reproachful eyes of the pig gazing steadfastly up at him.

"Arrah, don't be blaming me, Char-les, me poor lad! Don't look at me that way! Me heart's fair broke, so it is. Haven't I raised you since you were the size of that hand? An' a sociabler, civiler-mannered baste I niver saw. Musha, I wisht you were a cow, so I do; then you wouldn't be a pig an' have to be kilt. Heigh, ho! Sorrows the day! Come along up with me, agra, an' we'll have a petatie."

That night, long after the hearth was swept and the childer and herself were in bed, Jerry sat with his chin in his hands, gazing moodily into the smoldering turf. The heavy task of the morrow drove all wish for the bed from his mind, so the leaden-hearted lad decided to sit up until morning— the better to get an early start.

As thus he waited, the stillness of the night grew heavier and heavier around him, broken only by the spluttering of the ash-covered turf at his feet, and he felt the darkness of the room creeping up from behind, and pressing down upon his shoulders like a great cloak.

The expiring rush light on the old oak mantel above his head struggled feebly with the strangling shadows as it burned itself to the very rim of the tall brass candlestick. But the contest proved a hopeless one, and so at last, with one despairing spurt of yellow flame, the vanquished light sank gurgling and choking out of sight. Jerry marked how its soul, in one slender, wavering spire of gray smoke, crept softly upward and disappeared. With a little shivering shrug, the lad drew his stool closer into the hearth. "Someone stepped over me grave sartin that time," he complained. "My, but isn't this a murdherin' shuperstitious night?"

And the turf fire at his feet— sure, never before had its dull red caverns held so many weird and grostesque phantoms; an old woman with a bundle of sticks on her back glowed for an instant there, then suddenly changed and sank into a body stretched out on a low bier. And then the body rose slowly upright and stood a tall, long-faced, hunchbacked man who soon spread and spread, and then crumbled into a pack of running hounds. Jerry's fascinated eyes watched the pack until, with a sharp crackle and a little hiss of flame, the hounds dropped into an open sea of gray ashes. As they disappeared, a sudden chill filled the whole room, and on that instant, loud and shrill, Phelim, the old black cock, crowed from his perch outside the door— a most unlucky sign before midnight, as everyone knows. Jerry flung a startled look at the clock. Its two warning fingers pointed the hour of midnight. He hastily drew himself together on the stool, counting the slow, heavy strokes and dreading he knew not what. The last chime of the old clock was yet tingling through the room, when Jerry heard (and his heart turned to jelly at the sound) a strange, weird voice calling from outside under the window.

"Jerry! Jerry! Jerry O'Flynn!" wailed the voice. "Why don't you open the dure?"

But Jerry never moved; he sat with stiffened hair and wild, straining eyes fixed on the black windowpanes.

"Jerry! Jerry!" demanded the voice, now harsh and commanding. "I ask you once more, will you open?"

Slowly, like one asleep, Jerry arose and step by step, retreated backward till his groping hands touched the wall behind him. There with parted, dry lips, and trembling knees, he waited.

The clock had ticked five times— he timed it by his beating heart— when, without so much as a bolt being drawn, the door swung wide open, and from the blackness without, what should step boldly over the threshold but Char-les the pig. Not as he was wont to come, mind you, with friendly grunt and careless

swagger, but silent, and stern, and masterful. He marched into the room, over to the fireplace, and sat himself upright in quiet dignity upon the stool that Jerry had just left. Jerry never moved a muscle, but stood frozen with surprise and growing resentment that Char-les, the pig, should give himself so many airs and make himself so free about the house.

The beast never deigned so much as a side look at his master but, wriggling himself into a comfortable position on the stool, he opened his mouth and, in a gruff patronizing way, began to speak. At the sound of the strange voice, all the boy's fears rushed back on him.

"Jerry O'Flynn," said the pig, "what are ye afeared of? Come over and sit on that stool ferninst me, an' don't stand there shiverin' and shaken' like a cowardly bosthoon!"

"I'm not afeared," quavered Jerry as he sidled over and seated himself gingerly on the very edge of the stool. "But may I ax yez a fair, civil question?" says he.

"You may not," snapped Char-les. "You're here now to do as you're bid, and not to be axin' questions."

At this unheard-of impudence, Jerry's anger got the better of his fright. "As I'm bid!" he spluttered, thumping his knee. "What do you mane? Am n't I the masther?"

"Masther! Ho, ho! Masther! Be-dad, will ye listen to that!" roared the pig. "Why you dundherheaded omadhaun, who has been currycombing me, an' brushing me down all these months, an' who has been working for me early and late in the fields, to get butthermilk an' petaties for me brakwusts, I'd like to know! Masther indeed! Let me hear no more of that," grunted the pig, crossing his legs as he spoke. Jerry scratched his head in furious bewilderment.

"Tundher an' turf!" he gasped. "Thrue for ye, Char-les! I never thought of it that way. But thin, me lad, the rayson ye got such grand care was because I intinded to—" He stopped short, frightened out of his seven senses by a quiet look in the pig's eye.

"Intended to what?" asked Char-les calmly.

"Nawthin'," mumbled Jerry.

"Umph!" the pig grunted. "Fill the poipe and hand it over to me, and pay attention, for I've something to tell you. You know by this time, I suppose, that it's no ord'nary baste you have ferninst ye; an' I want ye to undherstand," says he, pointing to his pipe, "that tomorrow mornin', whin ye're takin' me to market, you'll be thravelin' in much betther company than I'll be in."

"Well, who and what are ye at all, at all?" demanded Jerry.

The pig leaned over and got a coal for his pipe. "Listen, and I'll expatiate," he puffed. "You must know that I am Killbohgan, the ould ancient Milesian maygician who, in an unlucky moment, had the comeither put on him by Killboggan, an oulder an' a trifle ancienther enchanter; and who, to escape from the parsecutions of Killboggan, changed himself into a hare."

"Oh, by the powers!" cried Jerry, slapping his knee with his hand. "The first hard worruk ye'll do in the mornin' will be to go out an' change me flock of ducks intil a herd of cows, so it will."

"Oh, you poor man," sighed the magician. "There was a time when such a thrick 'us be only sport and game for me. But wirrasthrue, that was hundherds of years ago. I once changed a hill of red ants into a dhrove of wild ulephants to plaze one of me sick childher. But Killboggan has dhrawn all the power from me now, an' I used the last spell I had that midnight whin I changed meself into a wee white bonive before your own horse-pitiful dure."

The pig scratched his ear reflectively with the stem of his pipe, and smiled, and shook his head sadly when Jerry remarked: "I aways knew there was something shuperior in your charackther, Char-les."

"Be that as it may be," continued Char-les, "as I was sayin': afther I had changed meself intil a hare, what did the bliggard Killboggan do but turn himself intil a hound, and for years and years, he hunted me from one end of Ireland ground to the other. One day, as we were goin' lickety splicket up the Giant's Causeway, the villain nearly had me by the hind leg, and findin' meself in such a duspurate amplush, I quick turned meself intil a herring an' dhropped intil the say.

"Well, anyway, it wasn't a minute till Killboggan had metamurphied himself intil a whale, and, by the mortial man, came sploshing in afther me. And so, for hundherds of years, we'd been rummagin' and rampagin' from one ind of the everlastin' salt says to the other, till on Chewsday last April, Ned Driscoll, who was out fishing for herrings, caught me in his net. An' as he was passin' your door that same night, I slipped out of his basket an' turned meself into a purty white bonive in the road beyant."

"Well, well, d'ye mind that," exclaimed Jerry. "Wondhers'll never sayse. And you can't gainsay, Char-les, but what you've got the best of good thratement."

"It's the truth you're spakin'," nodded the pig. "And now to prove me gratitude, I'll show ye a way to fill your pockets with goold. Whenever you need a little money, just take me to the nearest fair and sell me for the best price ye can

get. Then go your ways, and never fear, but I'll be back to ye safe an' sound by cockcrow."

In his excitement over this prospect, Jerry lost sight entirely of the sheer dishonesty of the plan. "Oh, by the powers," he exalted, "the goose that laid the goolden egg is a mere flaybite by comparison to you!"

"There's only one thing ye must be careful of," said the magician, raising his pipe warningly to his nose, "and that one thing is this: you are on no account to sell me to a dark, long-faced man with a hump on his back, for that'll be the tarnation schaymer of the worruld, Killboggan. But see, the day is breaking! Tie the rope to me leg, and off to Clonmel with us."

Jerry took the sociable creature at his word, and down the road they put. But the journey was so delayed by wonderful tales of goints and of magicians and by some fine old ballads that Char-les sang as they sat under a hedge to rest, that it was the middle of the forenoon before they found themselves in the busy marketplace of the fair. At once, Jerry was hailed on all sides, and it wasn't long till he was offered two pounds for his fine pig. Almost immediately aftherwards, Red Shaun, the drover, raised the bid to two pounds ten.

"No," cried Jerry. "I'll not take a penny less than three pound. And it's ashamed I am to part with him for that. Here you, Wullum!" he called to his first cousin, William Hagen, who stood by. "There's a letther for me in the post office beyant. Do you hold Char-les here till I go for it."

He slipped the rope into William's hand and was off like a shot. It wasn't two minutes till he was back again with the letther in his pocket. There stood William, a glad smile on his round, red face, and four gold sovereigns shining in his open palm. But the pig was nowhere to be seen.

"Where's Char-les?" shouted Jerry, a cold fear gripping his heart.

"Char-les is gone," chuckled William, "but here's the price of him; and a pound more than you axed for the lazy baste."

"Who bought him?" demanded Jerry anxiously. "Tell me quick, who bought him?"

"Sorra, do I know who the long-faced, black, ould targer was? But he seemed mighty glad to get the pig at four pounds and was in a great hurry to be away with himself."

Jerry tried to speak, but his voice at first failed him. "Did the schaymer have a hump on his back, I dunno?" he managed at last to gasp.

"No less," answered William, "a hump like a camel's. But what's come over ye, man? You're as white as a ghost."

For answer, Jerry pushed William aside and dashed madly into the surging crowd; and for the rest of the day, he searched every nook and corner for some trace of the lost Char-les, but in vain. It was well on to midnight when, footsore and sorry-hearted, the remorseful lad lifted the latch of his own cottage door. As he did, the breath almost left him, for there on the same stool, just as before, sat Char-les. But not altogether the same either, for instead of the usual jolly expression worn by the pig, there was now on his countenance a settled look of hopeless dejection. And Jerry noticed also that, although the pig's body was as big as ever, his sides were almost transparent. Indeed, the tongs leaning against the wall, near where the creature sat, were quite visible through the poor fellow's ribs.

As Jerry walked slowly toward the fireplace, the pig addressed him, and the sad tremble in his voice went straight to his master's heart.

"I'm dead now; now I'm dead, Jerry," wailed the pig. "I wrastled with that scoundhrel Killboggan till tin minutes ago, and his spells and charrums have me melted away to a lookingglass image of meself. Oh me, oh my, oh me, oh my! By accident, I got him down at last and managed to escape and fly to you. But he's comin'. He'll be here in a minute, and then goodbye forever to the raynowned Killbohgan. I can do no more. I'll vanish entirely."

"Och, what a murderin' pity," mourned Jerry, wringing his hands. "Is there no help for you?"

"There's only one poor chanst in all the worruld," moaned Char-les, "but I don't think you'd be ayquil to the task. If you could manage to stuff a handful of salt into Killboggan's mouth, that'd put an ind to his powers and his parsecutions. I'd soon grow fat ag'in. But sure, what's the use of talkin'— Oh, by this and that, here he is!"

The pig made a jump and a mad scramble for the other room and dived under the bed, and Jerry barely had time to snatch a fistful of salt from a crock on the dresser shelf, when the kitchen door flew open, and in strode a tall, humpbacked man with the longest, darkest face Jerry had ever seen.

"You have that villain Killbohgan here somewhere, an' you'd betther let me have him at once," croaked the dark man in a deep, harsh voice. He stood wide on his legs in the middle of the floor. "Ha, there he is, skulkin' under the bed. Wait till I have him out and finish him here ferninst ye."

With these words, the magician made a bolt for the other room, but as he did, Jerry, with a courage which has since become the settled boast of all his descendants, gave a quick spring and landed fair and square on the ugly intruder's

back. And then began a struggle which, for noise and destruction, has never been equaled, before or since, in any respectable man's kitchen. With his left arm clasped tight about the long, bony neck, Jerry strove with his right hand to thrust the fistful of salt into the villian's mouth.

Round and round spun the magician, as fast as any top, striving desperately meanwhile to avoid the handful of salt which Jerry just as desperately was endeavoring to make him swallow. From one end of the kitchen to the other they whirled, Jerry's legs flying out behind him like a couple of flails and sweeping everything in their way. Down went the table, up in the air flew the two stools, crash went the poor old clock, and, with one wild sweep, the two dignified brass candlesticks flew madly off the mantel. And then, saddest of all to relate, swish, crack! went Jerry's two legs against the churn-dasher, and the five gallons of fresh, sweet buttermilk spread like a white sheet over the floor.

"Oh, ye murdherin' thafe of the worruld! Oh, me two misfortunate legs!" roared Jerry. He gave the magician such a poke in the back with his knee as to drive for an instant every whiff of breath out of the rascal's body.

"Huroo! Huroo!" shouted Killbohgan's smothered voice from under the bed.

At that, the frantic enchanter changed his tactics. He now stood in the middle of the floor, bending his body up and down with the greatest rapidity, so that Jerry fluttered back and forth like a shirt on a clothesline in windy weather.

The brave man, however, never weakened his hold, and Killboggan soon found out that this plan was useless, too. So what does the rapscallion of an enchanter do but begin backing rapidly toward the fireplace.

"Oh, murdher in Irish, this is where the spalpeen's got me," groaned poor Jerry, twisting a frightened eye over his shoulder at the turf fire.

"Keep a firm grip on him, whatever happens," encouraged the invisible Killbohgan. "Ye're doin' foine."

Whether Killboggan intended to seat the poor lad on the live coals will never be known. At any rate, if such was his uncharitable intention, the maddened wizard miscalculated the direction, and instead of finding the fireplace, he succeeded only in banging the heroic Jerry against the wall with a terrible thump.

Hard as it was on the poor lad's bones, that same bump proved to be Jerry's salvation; for the rattling jar of it loosened the big, heavy picture of Dan'l O'Connell which hung enshrined on the whitewashed wall above them, and, as though of its own volition, down came Dan'l crash on Killboggan's head. The glass was smashed into smithereens, and the heavy frame hung itself round the neck of the bewildered magician like an ox yoke.

And that wasn't the best of it, either, for at this same moment, Killboggan's two feet slipped in the buttermilk, and down he went on his back to the floor like a load of turf. The grunt the fallen wizard let out of him could have been heard in the seven corners of the parish. There was an exultant "Hooroo!" from under the bed, and the next instant, Jerry, gasping and spluttering, was seated on the black lad's chest, striving still with might and main to pry open the long jaws and to crush the handful of salt through the scraggly yellow teeth.

Slowly the great jaws opened, and our hayro was making haste to poke in the saving salt, when suddenly a hand caught him from behind, and a familiar voice spoke in his ear.

"Get up out of that. I'm ashamed of ye. What are ye doin' to that stool?" It was his wife, Katie, who spoke.

But Jerry, breathing hard, still clung desperately to Killboggan, until looking more closely, what was his surprise and consternation to find that the wizard had some way changed himself into one of their own three-legged stools!

Jerry rose slowly to his stiffened knees and looked about him in great bewilderment, as well he might; for, wonder of wonders, there was no sign whatever in the room of the late desperate struggle. From his old place on the wall, Dan'l O'Connell, unharmed, smiled down lofty and serene upon the neatly set kitchen, while upright and solemn, the dark churn stood in its own quiet corner by the dresser. Indeed, there was not an article of furniture out of its place, and Jerry, as he knelt, looked round in vain for the sign of a single drop of buttermilk on the floor.

"Where's Killboggan?" he gasped, as he struggled to his feet.

"Kill who?" laughed Katie in stitches. "I've seen no Killboggan or Killhoggan, or Kill anybody else, aither. But you and that bliggard Char-les should be halfway to Clonmel by this time."

"Char-les, Char-les," Jerry repeated mournfully, wagging his head. "Sure, Char-les is gone, Katie, an' we'll never see the poor hayro ag'in."

"Won't we, then," laughed Katie. "Quit dhramin', avourneen, an' see who's lookin' in the door at ye."

Jerry looked as he was bidden, and there, with his head poked over the threshold, to his master's infinite amazement, stood Char-les, fat and comfortable-looking as ever, with a roguish smile in his eye which said plain as spoken words: "The top o' the mornin' to ye." It was already bright daylight.

"Take ye're bite of breakwus, darlin'," coaxed Katie, "an' the two of yez be off, but mind ye, don't sell the pig for a penny less than three pound."

"Sell him! Katie— Sell him!— I wouldn't part with Char-les for any money." At that, he up and told her all that had happened during the wonderful night, and he wound up by saying: "It may have been a dhrame, an' thin again, it may have been a wision, but dhrame or wision, I'll take no chances in having the vartuous Killbohgan murdhered."

"At laste," insisted Katie, "Mrs. Clancey an' the letther is no shupernatural wision, so take the road in your hands an' bring us back worrud of it."

And so, indeed, Jerry did, and toward evening, back he came, only the top of his hat visible over the stack of bundles he carried. With dancing feet and clapping hands, the children opened wide the door, and Jerry marched proudly in and began to unload. A bonnet box with a bonnet in it that dazzled Katie's eyes; ten yards of calico; eight yards of beautiful red flannel; two pounds of good black tea; three pairs of shoes for the children. "God bless thim," and a great package of tobacco and a fine new pipe for himself.

"Me Uncle Dan in Amerikay isn't dead afther all, Katie," he exulted, "and to prove it, he put tin pounds in the letther; an' afther buyin' all ye tould me to and lashins more, I paid the rint, thanks be, and I have still a matther of four pounds tin tucked safe an' deep in the bottom of me breeches pocket."

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## 7: The Crocks of Gold

ONE June morning on a market day at Fethard, while the sun was as yet winking and blinking a sleepy eye over the top of shadowy Sleive-na-mon, Darby O'Gill, the knowledgeable man, stood upon the threshold of his cottage, impatient to be off to the town.

"In the name of marcy, don't ax me to raymimber another thing, Bridget," he complained. "Ye have me bothered and kilt as it is wid yer 'raymimbers', so ye have."

Bridget's voice came soothingly from within. "Ah, thin, so ye are kilt, darlint! But sure as eggs is eggs, I came near forgettin' to raymimber that we haven't a pinch of tay in the house. Whativer else ye forgit, raymimber to bring me half a pound of the foinest black tay. Oh, wirra, wirra, the medicine for little Eileen's cough! Where's the bottle? I had it in me hand a minute ago." At that, Bridget appeared on the threshold as rosy and fresh as the June morning itself.

"And Darby dear, stand still and listen— sure ye have me flusthered wid yer twistin's an' turnin's. The sorra thing I can raymimber— come here till I fix yer neckerchief. Oh, musha, will ye look at him! I want ye to carry careful this dish to Mrs. Malony's. Ah ha, ye'll break it if ye put it in yer pocket with the bottle! Oh, by this an' that, get me two ya-ards of rid flannel to make little Mickey a new petticut; the poor child might as well be without anything, the way he is. An' get two dozen of white chaney buttons an' a packet of black linen thread."

Darby was striving hard to be calm.

Bridget put a coaxing hand on her husband's shoulder. "Shure, it's aisy to kape yer moind on it, avourneen, if ye'll sthrive not to be thinkin' of an-nything else. An' bring home a little brown sugar, a matther of three pounds say; an' pay attintion, Darby, while that thafe of the worruld, Dugan, is weighin' it out to ye. An' now be off with ye! No, wait a minute! Ye'd betther get a ya-ard an' a half of corduroy for patches; an' call in to me Aunt Nancy's on yer way back, an' get me the settin' of goose eggs she promised me— an' do you—"

In sheer disgust, Darby flopped himself down on the threshold. "The duckins a foot I'll stir out of this today," he said desperately. "Go yerself, you, an' get yer settin' of eggs!"

It was impossible for anyone to be angry long when Bridget laughed, for she had the merriest, cheeriest laugh with her in all the world. It began with a low

thrush's gurgle, and then up it trilled and then down again and off into a note as sweet as a linnet's song in May.

"Don't sit there whinging like little Mickey," she cried, as she pulled the rebellious man to his feet. "Be off now, and God go with ye— an'— Oh, Darby—"

"Don't dare tell me another thing," Darby interrupted fiercely.

"I was only going to say that ye mustn't be stayin' so late at Fethard that ye'll have to be takin' the shortcut home through Hagan's meadow afther dark. Ye know they did be sayin' at O'Hara's christening that Norah Sullivan's Dan tould Barney Delany that as he was coming from Jimmy Fogarty's wake and was gallopin' by Hagan's meadow, he could almost swear he saw back in the moonlight the shadow of a man pointing a gun at him. The Lord betune us and all harm! Everyone agreed that it must be Black Mulligan's ghost took to walking again."

Faith, now this was disturbing news. All the world knew the story. One night, twenty-five years before that very day, Mack Mulligan, the gamekeeper, shot and killed, in Hagan's meadow, poor, harmless old William Fagan for poaching a rabbit. And though Mulligan died on the scaffold at Clonmel, that wasn't the last of him. From time to time, his restless spirit, gun in hand, walked the scene of his red crime to the terror of the countryside. All that terrible story quivered now through Darby's mind.

"They say, too," Bridget warned the now-attentive listener, "that any night now, ye can see lights movin' round in the ruined abbey where the crocks o' goold lie hid."

"What have the crocks o' goold to do with Black Mulligan? What put crocks o' goold into yer head?" Darby asked suspiciously.

"Didn't Mrs. O'Hara tell me only last night that ye put the challenge on her Dominic to go hunt for thim?"

"Huh! Dominic O'Hara! We hear ducks talkin'," laughed Darby. "That challenge came out of the bottom of the fourth glass o' punch."

He tried to speak carelessly, but that news about Black Mulligan took so much of the pleasure out of the prospects for the day that the bothered man leaned a moment against the cottage door, filling his pipe and ruminating. Maybe he'd better put off the journey. Bridget stood with puckered lips, watching every change of his eyebrows. It's a queer way married women have of being able to tell what's in their husbands' minds, especially when it's a thing the wives themselves don't like.

"I'll bring Bill Donohue, the tinker, home with me," he thought to himself.

Instantly Bridget spoke up, and a threatening note hardened in her voice. "That wandhering vagabone, Bothered Bill Donohue, will be looking to fasten himself to ye again," she warned. "The last time ye brought him here, wasn't I soaping and scrubbing and cleaning for the week afther to get all trace of him out of the house. Now mind this, if ye ever bring that lad streeling again over that doorstep, yerself and himself can have it betwixt ye. I'll take the childher and go to me father's."

Wasn't Bridget with her unreasonable cleanliness enough to heart-scald any man? There's such a thing as being too clean for comfort, and Bridget O'Gill, if any woman ever did, suffered from that complaint.

Why, thought he, couldn't she let the poor fellow come home with him? True, Bill was not exactly a hawthorne bush in pink blossom! And what if his muddy brogues did leave a few tracks on the kitchen floor? Sure he couldn't help that! "However, there is nothing so unreasonable as an over-neat woman," he thought, as he flung himself angrily off the step.

Bridget stood a minute, a smile on her lips and a twinkle in her brown eyes, as she watched him down the road, little dreaming of the wild happenings that lay between her husband and his fateful way back.

The three counties elbowed one another in Fethard by the time Darby reached the old town gate. From that on, it was a slap on the shoulder here, and a bone-crushing handshake there, and a "God save ye, Darby, me bouchal" everywhere, so that the pleasant afternoon filled with jokes and news and gossip waned and grew dim before the busy lad could spare a thought for any of Bridget's commissions. Some of them had slipped clean from his mind. But through all the friendly greetings and pleasantries of the day, a constant worry smouldered, for whichever way he turned, the sharp gray eye of Bothered Bill Donohue, the tinker, kept burning a spot in the middle of his back.

"Bad luck to him," muttered Darby ruefully, "if I bring the thieving blaggard home wid me, Bridget'll skiver the two of us. None of blood or breed iver rayfused man or mortial the width of his back for a place to sleep, or a bite an' a sup to ate. I'd like his company besides, at laste for a bit of the way. Whist! I know what I'll do. I'll slip intil Murphy's stable here an' bide awhile out of sight, an' whin the rover's gone, I'll whip over to Dugan's an' intil the back dure with me, buy me wares and off, home with me."

No sooner said than done. For a half hour, Darby waited, grumbling, in the stable among the cows. No use! When at last he ventured over and poked a cautious head in at the back door of Dugan's shop, a well-known voice hailed him:

"Come in, Darby asthore, I've been waitin' for ye this half hour. I'll be goin' home wid ye the night, I'm thinkin', to give ye a hand wid the bundles." And there, sitting calmly on an upturned tub, lolled Bothered Bill Donohue, the tinker. The vagabond's empty pipe was gripped upside down in his teeth— a pathetic hint to the callous Dugan— and he gathering with rambling hand constant mouthfuls of the fragrant contents of the scattered barrels, boxes, and cases.

"We'd betther hurry, me bouchal," he urged. "We've a long road ahead of us. I don't like to kape Bridget waitin'. Whatever hour we'll get home," he confided loudly to all in the shop, "Bridget O'Gill'll be kapin' a foine, hot supper fer us."

"Thank ye kindly, Bill," Darby mumbled shamelessly, "an' it's meself that's sore an' sorry that ye can't be comin' with me; but Joey Hooligan was lookin' everywhere for ye. It's a great job of mendin' pots he has for the morrow. Hurry now, and you'll be up with him before he gets to the crossroads."

"Huh! To blue tunder with Joey Hooligan an' his stack of ould leaky pots! It's with yerself I'm goin'." Again he took the shop-full of waiting customers into his boisterous confidence. "The rispectablest woman an' the comfortablest house in Tipperary is yer own, Darby O'Gill," he cried. Then, coming down from the box and slapping the dust from his trousers, he added, "Go on, now, dacint man, an' get what yer gettin'. I'll go bail ye forgot half what herself tould ye to bring."

"I haven't forgot," Darby resented a bit spitefully. "Weigh me out one pound of yer foinest black tay, Tom Dugan, an' as much brown sugar as'll go with it; an' I— an' "— he rubbed a perplexed chin—"Wirra, it was something for the childher."

"A pound of tobaccy, a quart of good whiskey, an' a couple of clay poipes," Bill suggested. "No, that wasn't it, but now ye mintion it, maybe I nade thim as well! Have ye a good gallon jug, Tom Dugan? It was something for little Mickey's petticut. Was it a yard of corduroy or—" Darby's troubled gaze floundered helplessly from one laden shelf to the other. "Maybe it was rid flannin," suggested Dugan.

"Or gingerbreads," enticed Bill. "I've always noticed that little Mickey was very fond of gingerbreads, an' I don't wondher; I loike thim meself," he said, beaming his approval on the ring of listening neighbors.

"I think it was the flannin, Dugan. How many ya-ards do I want?" Darby threw himself helplessly on the mercy of the shopkeeper.

Dugan folded his arms judicially, shut one eye, and pursed his lips, "Does Mickey take afther yer wife's fambly, the Shaughnessy, or is he an O'Gill, I dunno?"

"He's the dead sphilt of me father's brother Wullum," Darby answered, gulping on a note of pride.

"Ah, thin no nade to ax! I'll warrant ye he's a foine-soized lad. I should say a matther of five ya-ards'd be lashins for a petticut an' a bit left over for patches." He turned to pull down a bolt of flaming red.

"Patches! That's it," cried Darby. "I want something for patches!"

"Why don't ye take two or three of thim foine smoked mackerel?" urged Bill, unctuously. He lifted one and held it aloft by its dripping tail. "I niver saw fatter," he smacked.

Darby nodded uncertain consent at Dugan; and the three went on till, between the urgings of Bill and the suggestions of sympathetic Dugan, Darby and the tinker finally left the shop, their arms filled with bundles as high as their chins.

The market was well over. The two strode down an empty road. The twinkling lights in the cottage windows got farther and farther apart. As they plodded along through the fast-growing twilight, Bill wore a settled expression of placid contentment, while the knowledgeable man glowered his troubles at the blurring hedges. The dusk had thickened into murky darkness when the pair stopped at Nancy Morrissey's for the goose eggs; and, of course, that good woman wouldn't hear of their leaving the house till they had finished a few cups of tea with a potato and a rasher or so of bacon.

"Carry the bashkit in the middle of the handle, Darby acushla," she cried as the two stepped carefully out again into the middle of the road, "for if ye so much as joult one of thim raymarkable eggs, ye'll spile a lovely goose. An' now, goodnight and good luck to yez." It was neither the length nor the loneliness that weighed heaviest on the mind of Darby. Over and over, the knowledgeable man was asking himself, "What'll she say to me this night? What excuse can I give for bringing this blaggard home?"

Suddenly he stopped in the road to laugh. "By the livin' farmer, I have it!" he chuckled. "I'll tell Bill that I'm goin' over to the abbey to dig for the goold, an' I'll ax him to come over an' help me. An' whin he refuses me— as, of course, he will— I'll sind him on to Bridget, and it's meself wouldn't be in his brogues thin for tin new shillings."

The eggs rattled in the basket with the dint of Darby's suppressed chuckling till a sobering realization of his own risk flared into his mind.

"Oh well, I won't venture but a few steps into the meadow," the lad finally argued to himself "It's only needful to climb across the low stile and stayle one or two tiptoes into the field. Bill won't be out of my hearing at all. I'll make him keep

whistling or singing. It'd be foine if I crept along beside him inside the hedge and at the gap in the corner give one shout. Wouldn't it be sport if it was only light enough to watch the mad gallop he'll make then!"

The eggs in the basket rattled once more. If Darby could have foreseen the mad gallop that lay before himself, his laugh might have changed its tune at that.

Bill spoke up, as if vaguely divining what was in his companion's mind. "My, but ye're the bould man, Darby O'Gill! They were sayin' all over the market today what a courageous hayro ye wor to' be goin' wid Dominic O'Hara afther the crocks o' goold in the ould abbey. Far be it from me to put corrections on ye or the loikes of ye, but I can't help thinkin' that aich one of yez is a pair of two tunderin' fools."

In spite of his bundles, the hero's chest swelled. "Well, I tell ye, Bill," he swaggered, "I'm at a loss about takin' that same Dominic O'Hara; he has no more conthrol over his long tongue than if it belonged to yerself, an' the worruld knows that if an-ny wan so much as mintions a pious wurrud while he's diggin' for thim crocks o' goold, in a twinkle he may be turned into a big yellow ox, or into a bit of a starved wran. Now, ye know yerself, Bill, that while Dominic is a nice, dacint man wid the best of intintions, he has wan big fault; ye niver know whin he's goin' to rip out wid a 'God save ye koindly' or a 'Saints presarve us.' So it's what I wor just thinkin' about yerself, Bill; ye niver said a pious worrud in yer life; an'—"

"Bad luck to me if I'll do it," interrupted Bill promptly.

"It'll be near midnight by the time we reach Hagan's meadow," went on Darby, paying no heed to the refusal, "so we'll lave Dominic O'Hara go diggin' for himself tomorrow night, an' me an' you'll go pardners tonight."

The offer was like sousing Bill with a tub of cold water. He stopped still in the road and shivered. "Hould!" he choked. "There's nayther luck nor grace in even talkin' that kind o' talk!" He clutched Darby's arm, and his voice sank to a whisper. "Listen! As sure as gun is iron, Darby, some mystarious thing is creepin' an' crawlin' on t'other side of the hedge. Whist, they're listenin' now. Oh, millia murdher, don't ye hear thim kapin' sthill?"

There's nothing so quickly contagious as terror. The tinker's genuine fright sent Darby's own heart with a jump into his mouth. Still and all, it would never do to show the white feather. So he stuttered, "Ye're right, Bill, me poor fellow, I knew that a half-hour ago. There's not one, but a dozen of thim beyant in the field. An' oh, by the hokey"— Darby's voice sank to a careless whisper—"there's a tall black man standin' just behind the hedge. Don't look 'round!"

Bill gave a great lurch forward, as though suddenly kicked. "Wow!" he cried. "If ye don't come on, Darby O'Gill, I'll throw ivery last bundle at yer red head an' run for me loife!"

"Wait a bit; it's the chance of yer life," Darby remonstrated, as he hurried after the tinker. "Come with me to the abbey, avick," he called, "an' I'll give you foive thurds of the goold, an' we'll allow Bridget, the crachure, four thirds, lavin' only six thurds for meself! I'm making a rich man out of ye."

"Don't be talkin'," shouted Bill with a fresh burst of speed. "I won't sthray a fut off this highroad tonight for all the riches of Crashus."

"Hold a minute! My, but yer a har-rd one at a bargain." Darby caught up with him to lay a detaining hand on his friend's shoulder. "I'll tell ye what I'll do: you take the six thurds, an' that'll lave poor Bridget only the three thurds."

"Will ye niver lave off," hissed Bill, fiercely shaking off the detaining hand. "If ye say wan more wurrud about that onlucky ruin, I'll hut ye a kick that ye'll never forget."

Darby slowed up in the road. "If ye didn't want to go, why didn't ye say so at once?" he expostulated. "Here's Hagan's meadow. There's many a person would give a leg for yer chance this night. Won't ye come? Well, then I must go alone. Tell Bridget I'll be home within the hour. Good luck till ye."

For an instant, the two faced each other through the inky blackness. In spite of his attempted heroic air, Darby's voice sounded a bit forced and gasping.

"Man alive, are yez in airnest?" cried the tinker.

"I'll cross over the meadow to the abbey," his companion continued, but he shivered as he spoke.

"Keep steady on yer way, and look naythe r to the right or to the left, Bill. There's them that will be follying you that's dead an' gone these hundred years. You won't see them, but maybe ye'll hear them. Pay no attention, and ye're safe enough. Go on now!"

The last sentence spent itself on an empty world, for the tinker had instantly dissolved from hearing as well as from sight.

The knowledgeable man shouted a quavering warning from the top of the stile: "An' I say, Bill, ye may as well whustle as loud as ye can. Thin ye won't be so frightened." He listened an instant, but no reassuring sound drifted back.

If the ground in Hagan's meadow had been covered with red-hot coals instead of being carpeted as it was with cool, sweet grass, Darby O'Gill's feet would not have shrunk more from coming in contact with it. However, Bothered Bill was not to be trusted; he might be watching and listening in the darkness a few feet down

the road, so there was nothing left for it, and Darby, bracing his soul, jumped off the step, landed in the meadow, and ran a few bewildered steps into the haunted field. There he halted, straining his ears. There never was so black or so silent a night before nor since. In spite of every effort at self-control, the lad's flesh began to creep. "Why don't that coward whustle?" he complained bitterly.

Suddenly he stood straining every sense for some kind of sign from Bill. The uneasy man could have sworn to a short sigh in his ear that he felt a quick, cold breath on his cheek.

That was enough! The next second, he took a deer's leap in what he thought was the direction of the road and sprinted for his life; but murdher in Irish! There was no stile! Where had it gone? It, too, had disappeared. He ran a good hundred yards before realizing that he must be running in the wrong direction.

"Oh, blessed day, where's the stile?" he gasped, coming to a dead stop. "I'm in the middle of Hagan's meadow! I've lost me way! The curse of the crows on you, Bill Donohue, for a slinkin' daysarter. Is that a light beyant, I dunno?"

The poor fellow half-sank to his knees and was crouched, striving with every vein of his body to make out if that glimmer of light in the distance shone from the old abbey or whether it was only the fitful blink of a friendly star, when faintly pounded toward him through the darkness a sound of terror— nothing less than the quick fall of pursuing footsteps.

"Black Mulligan is after me," he groaned. "I'm a massacreed man!" In the heavy stillness, the approaching steps thudded like the footfalls of a giant. A weakness came into the lad's chest so that every bundle and package dropped from his shaking arms; all but the eggs went to the ground. Relieved of the bundles, but still holding to the basket, Darby bolted again into the darkness and ran for his life.

There weren't three men in the barony that could throw a quicker leg before them than Darby O'Gill, and never before that night had he put such speed into his nimble heels. But, fast as he went, the thudding footsteps behind gained on him every second. The breath was leaving him, too, and it seemed only a matter of a few more yards when he'd be nabbed by the neck like a hunted hare. Suddenly a most terrible cry electrified the blackness. An approaching voice, in a wild, high shriek, called his name: "Da-arby, Da-arby O'Gill," it wailed.

"The Lord help us, I'm lost," panted Darby. "It's Mulligan himself."

The poor boy's knees failed him then, and he had just strength enough left to totter to one side. That proved the lucky move, and not a second too soon, either, for he barely lurched out of the path when a great, black, shapeless blur whirred

by in the gloom. So close did it pass that the hunted man might easily have touched the dreadful thing with an outstretched hand. As the shape rushed by, uttering short, inarticulate groans and cries, it appeared to be headless and legless and about the height of the new chapel door.

"It's not Mulligan; it's the ghost of William Fagan himself running away from Black Mulligan, the murdhering gamekeeper," thought Darby. "But how did he get me name? He must know I'm here."

All that had happened might have been a nine years' mystery for the seven counties, only that just then, a bright moon stuck its head through the clouds and took a querulous peep at the night. In the quick wave of light that followed, everything in Hagan's meadow became quite visible, so that Darby was able to make out clearly the form of the flying object. And what the knowledgeable man saw then stiffened every nerve and muscle in his body with angry amazement; for from whom had he been running but from Bothered Bill Donohue.

"Da-arby! Da-arby! Where are ye, Dar-rby?" bleated Bill. Terror had split the tinker's voice into a piping falsetto.

At the sound, every shred of Darby's fear turned into white rage. He snatched a big goose egg from the basket and, with all the strength of his arm, let it fly at the tinker. As a gossoon, no lad in the country had a surer aim in shying stones than that same Darby O'Gill.

"Take that!" he yelled. The roar that followed this blow was answered by the startled owls in the ruined abbey at the far end of the field.

Bill stopped to feel his head. "Oh, I'm kilt," he shrieked. "Me head's sphlit into three halves. I feel me wet brains runnin' down be me shoulders. Ow wow! Da-arby, Da-arby, save me!" and again, on he plunged forward like a race horse.

"The Divil mend ye!" shouted Darby. "Come back till I bate the loife out of ye. Where are yer bundles? What have ye done with the mackerel?"

But Bill, electrified with terror, ran on, and Darby followed. The horse that won the Curragh cup would have been proud of their company that night.

"Millia murdher, the omadhaun's makin' straight for the Fairies' bush," panted Darby. "Come back!" he roared.

Then a strange thing happened. Darby saw the tinker throw up both arms and, with a despairing cry, disappear from the face of the earth.

Now, in the middle of Hagan's meadow stands an ancient clump of hazel trees, known far and wide as the Fairies' bush, and just beside the bush runs a deep, dry ditch. As Bill went galloping past with head thrown back and eyes

bulging in terror, a malicious root reached up and caught the tinker's heedless feet, and thump! he was rolling head over heels to the bottom of the ditch.

For a second, he lay where he had tumbled; but only a second, for in mind and body, the lad moved quick as a cat. Indeed, he was already scrambling to his feet again and had reached the top of the bank when Darby himself came charging along like a mad bull, stumbled on that same malicious root and plunged headfirst into Bill. Saints above, but that was a thump! There was a confused whirl of legs and arms, two series of smothered, rasping cries, and then our astounded heroes, aimlessly clutching and tearing at each other, rolled back, a squirming heap, into the ditch.

The desperate tinker, sure that he was in the grip of Black Mulligan, fought like a tiger. "Ghost or no ghost, yez had no right to break the middle of me back! Take that!" he yelled.

The first blow caught Darby just under the ribs, but the second struck him fair on the chest.

"Ouch! I'm spacheless!" Darby gasped. "I'll have yer loife's blood for this, Bill Donohue."

"Why, thin, is that yerself, Misther O'Gill?" the tinker asked in honest amazement, one hand still gripped in Darby's hair. "I thought ye wor a spurrit."

Freeing himself, Darby rose feebly to his knees and, without a word, began climbing out of the ditch. The bank was steep and slippery with the dew, so that at first, the lad was hard set to get a foothold. He reached the top, however, and was clutching at a bit of a twisted root when, to his unspeakable surprise, the root began to twist and to squirm and to wriggle in his hand.

Now, up to that minute, everything that had happened to our bold Tipperary men since they left the fair might have chanced with anyone else going along that same road.

"It's a young rabbit I've caught," Darby thought. He raised the thing for a closer look, when suddenly a little foot flew out like lightning and kicked him squarely on the nose, and a wee, spiteful voice piped up: "Put me down, ye thunderin' bliggard! Ye've broke the ribs of me side! Pick up me cap, ye schoundrel, an' put it on me head so I'll have the power to turn you an' that sthreelin' villain behind ye into two yellow tomcats." And there, struggling in Darby's fist raged a bareheaded little old man in a green velvet jacket and brown knee breeches. His snapping black eyes and weazened face were the angriest Darby had ever seen.

"Man alive, Bill, come here. I think I've got the Leprechaun!" shouted Darby.

"Hould him tight. Don't take yer eye off him," puffed Bill as he scrambled to his feet. "We'll make him give us the favors of three grand wishes to buy his freedom."

"Ye lie, ye daytractin' mullet-headed dayrogotory vituperator," raged the little man. "I'm not the Leprechaum! I'm Nial the Scold from Sleive-na-mon; an' I've been waitin' here these three nights to help ye whin ye wint diggin' for the crocks o' goold. An' I've lost my cap, I've tould ye. This is the thanks I get. Where have ye been? What kep' ye, ye lazy, fiddlefaddling, pottherin', dawdlin' polthroons."

Darby recognized the little lad at once.

Sure as gun is iron, no other than Nial himself was in it. Through the six months I have told you of before when Darby himself was a prisoner of the Good People in the heart of their mountain Sleive-na-mon, it's many a chat he shared with that famous Scold. There was no harm in the little fellow; Darby knew that well. But he knew, too, that Nial had the most spiteful tongue in the world. Unreasonable anger is always the first to follow needless fright.

Darby twisted the fairy upside down, gave him a vicious squeeze, and warned, "Aisy, aisy there. Aist or West, since the day I was bor-rn, I niver heard yer aquil for bad langwidge. An' I tell ye now, if ye say wan more of thim bliggard wurruds, I'll rap the little head of ye again this stone. Tell me, what d'ye mane about waitin' for us to go diggin' for the crocks o' goold?" He gave the fairy a rattling shake.

"Sthop that!" roared the captive. "Do that agin if ye dare! Wait till I get me cap on so I can wurruk me spells! I'll— I'll sussitate the both of yez, so I will."

Bill was the first to recover from this deluge of hard names and, drawing a long breath, he blurted, "By this an' that, Darby, I'll stan' no more. Hand the lad here till I souse him."

"Oho, is that you, Bill Donohue? I thought it was Dominic O'Hara that was in it. Man alive, Darby O'Gill, what are ye doin' here with that raycreant malyfacthor of a cockathrice of a thinker?"

"Softly now," warned Darby, pushing Bill aside, as the tinker made a thrust at the fairy with his stick. "I'm thinkin' he's here as a friend. Aisy now, what wor ye sayin', little hayro, about the crocks o' goold?" And Darby loosened his fingers so that the fairy stood upright in his hand. The tiny lad shook himself and adjusted his cloak.

O'Hara were goin' to dig for the crocks o' goold, an' it's little likin' we Good People have for the unconjaynial mootherin' spurrits that's guardin' the crocks these fourteen hundred years, or is it fifteen, I dunno. There's nothin' that King Brian Connors and the Good People of Sleive-na-mon wish for half as much as for

some mortal man to take from them those same crocks o' goold, and in that way to scatter to the four winds that nest of shupernatural nuisances. Have yez the courage? I doubt yez."

"Look at that now!" exulted Darby. "Shure we thought ye wor an innimy. To tell the thruth, Nial, yer honor, Misther Donohue here felt just a trifle afeared of meetin' up wid thim same ghosts."

The little fairy flung a glance of withering disdain at the tinker. "What are yez all afeared of? Don't ye know that one of these days yez'll all be ghosts?"

"I'm not afeared of thim," bragged Darby, "but I don't loike 'sociating wid the loikes of thim. Ould Mrs. Callahan had a foine charrum that'd kape yer heart lifted on the loneliest road and the darkest night; she wasn't afeared of ghost livin' or dead, and she promised to whusper it to me before she died; but the poor crachure forgot the wurruds. I wisht now I had them— maybe ye raymimber thim?"

"Faix, I've heard that charrum of Mrs. Callahan's these hundherds of years," said the fairy, "but I'll give you a betther wan. Besides, mine has a grand chune to it."

"I feel," interrupted Bothered Bill pulling out his pipe and reaching for the tobacco in Darby's pocket, "I feel" said he, "as if I wor in a dhrame an' I'd wake up an-ny minute."

"Do ye want to know the charrum, or don't yez?" insisted the wee fellow impatiently.

"We may as well," agreed Darby.

"Who in the worruld will believe us?" mused the tinker.

"Thin hould out yer hand straight, Darby, so I can sit on it," commanded the fairy.

Darby did as be was bid, and Nial, seating himself comfortably on Darby's palm, threw back his head. His voice, like the tinkle of a little silver bell, sprinkled the darkness:

*Oh Phadrig and Phelim and Red Conan More*
*The Lehras and Lahras are gatherin',*
*Come out of the mountains, they're weltin' me sore,*
*Bring yer sojers and champeens to lather 'em.*

"You must larn it. Sing it over with me. Now, all together," urged the little fellow earnestly.

Half-shamefacedly at first, the others took up the tune and sang it over and over, but at last roared it so lustily that "Bring yer sojers and champeens to lather 'em" was heard a good half-mile away in her own house by big Mrs. Flaherty, as truthful a woman as lives in the village of Ballinderg.

When they had sung the powerful charm many times, the wee man said, "Well, so far, so good. Now ye're perfected. First and foremost, it's not in the abbey at all that the crocks o' goold are buried, but undher the yew tree in the great court where the monks do be lyin'."

"Come on, Darby, an' bring the fairy-man wid ye," cried Bill, starting up. The courage of the charm emboldened him.

"Botheration on ye for a tinker," snapped the fairy. "Will ye have patience? Ye must not begin to dig till afther midnight, I warn yez, and ye must ind before cockcrow. After cockrow, yez might just as well be diggin' with yer spades in the middle of the ocean for all the goold ye'll find. An' this is the way ye'll go about it. Ye'll find a bran' new pick an' a shovel lyin' snug be the abbot's grave— the grave diggers had thim out this morning— an' ye'll measure foive lengths of the pick handle toward the broken gateway, an' there's the identical spot where ye must dig. Ye'll find goold 'nough there to make you and yer ginerations rich forever."

Darby gave a great cough into his hand, and Bill Donohue swallowed hard at a big lump that popped into his throat.

"Don't think that the ondertakin' is an aisy wan," warned the fairy, "for there'll be thim watchin' ye the while, an' one in perticular that ye've often heard tell of, that would sthrike the sight from yer eyes an' wither the tongue in yer head if ye'll let thim."

"And what's to perwint thim?" asked Darby.

"Ah ha! That's what I'm sent here to tell ye. Until the sthroke of midnight, the ghosts beyant are as helpless as a field full of playing childher, and afther cockcrow, they're nayther more nor less than a flock of jackdaws roosthin' in the ould rune. Let yez hurry now before midnight and make a ring of holly twunty feet wide around the spot where ye're to dig, the way the rapscallions can't come within hand's rache of ye. The ghost of no deceased person can cross a twig of holly."

"Shure, the whole worruld knows that," boasted Bill. "If anyone has a ring of holly around him, no shupernatural ghost can bother him."

"Ha! Is that so?" sneered the wee man. "Well, maybe ye know this, too, Mr. Di-og-gan-ees the pillosopher, that if ayther of the two of ye spake a pious or a

rayligious worrud while ye're diggin' in that place, ye'll niver raygret it but wance, an' that'll be all the days of yer loife."

"Raymimber that, Bill Donohue," warned Darby, "an' grip yer tongue between yer teeth, or I'll make surgent's worruk of ye."

Nial lifted a silencing finger. "Whativer ye see an' whativer ye hear," he cautioned, "stir not a stir outside that ring of holly till cockcrow. All the cajolin' an' all the connivin' that can be larned in foive hundhered ginerations'll be used this night to frighten ye or to coax ye to where they can rache ye. I pity yez if they win. If they can kape yez off the goold till after cockcrow, they'll have yez bate."

"How'll we know whin it's midnight?" asked Darby. The little fairy laughed long and low, but something in the sound of that silver laugh raised the hair on their heads.

"Niver moind," he said. "If an-ny human bein' sets foot in the abbey afther midnight lookin' for the crocks o' goold, there'll be lads there, an' plinty of thim, that'll let him know the toime o' day. And now, Darby O'Gill, raymimber to sing that charrum whin yer afeared. Take up me hat now, an' put it on me head. Good luck go wid yez!" Whisk, he was gone.

By and by, the drowsy moon, tossing its heavy blanket of clouds to the top of Sleive-na-mon, slipped higher up into the sky the better to spy out what mischief Bothered Bill Donohue and Darby O'Gill were up to. It grinned its surprise to find the two bold adventurers at the very gateway of the ruined cloister. There the pair waited, their arms bulging with holly and both hesitating and arguing angrily as to which should go in first.

"Oho, will ye look at the moon, Bill! I thought she was dhrownded in the say!" interrupted Darby.

The tinker cast up a disgusted eye. "A fardin' candle'd throw more light," he grumbled. "But, man alive, what are ye waitin' for? In twunty minutes more, it'll be on the sthroke of midnight!"

"Yes, but listen, Bill," confided Darby. "I was, thinkin'! Supposin' me watch is twunty minutes slow? It's always ayther that much slow or that much fast whin it's runnin'. An' just think, if it happened to be past midnight, an' I was to go in there now, why— they'd disthroy me from the face of the airth. So you go in first, me brave fellow, an' don't be afeared, for I'll be standin' here watchin' ye."

"An' wouldn't they disthroy meself as well," snorted the tinker in hurt surprise. "No, no. You own foive thurds of the goold, so you go in first, Darby O'Gill. That's only fair!"

"Oh, that sounds fair enough," conceded Darby, "but ye're not lookin' at it in a sinsible light. Think a bit. If anything happened to me, see what a loss entirely it'd be to the barony. Ye know well, Bill avourneen, I've a snug bit of a fa-arm, and besides that, I'm the father of eight beautiful childher, not mintioning that I'm the husband of a very shuperior woman. I'm a rayspictable, dacint man, an' you are only— You see, Bill, we must all listen to rayson— you are only— Of course, you're a grand tinker, the worruld knows that, but confaydential betwixt us now, d'ye think ye'd be much missed?"

Bill's answer was merely a splutter.

"Take yer elbow out of me back," suddenly roared Darby. "Stop scroogin' me, or by the powers, I'll—" he said no more, for with one tremendous lurch, Bill sent the knowledgeable man sprawling through the broken arch and stumbling with great strides into the dim, shadowy cloister. He himself stood without the arch a moment, his head peering through. As soon as the tinker made sure that no misfortune had befallen his friend, he followed Darby into the old abbey.

As that was no place for a quarrel, the two set silently to furious work, and ten minutes later, a wide ring of holly encircled the yew tree. Then only the moon shadows and the creeping murmurs of the trees and the mysterious noises of the grass-covered tombs stirred the churchyard. In the corner of this hallowed spot, Darby O'Gill and Bothered Bill Donohue, pickax and shovel in hand, stood waiting in shivering suspense the first ghostly sign of the fateful midnight. The chilling stillness and a quickened sense of lurking invisible beings grew heavier from moment to moment.

"Don't you think, Bill," Darby advised softly, "this'd be a foine opporchunity for ye to thry that charrum?" The tinker cleared his throat two or three times behind his hand.

"How does it begin, Darby? Isn't it th' Therums or Tharums?" he whispered.

The knowledgeable man started in dismay. "Ye don't mane to tell me ye've forgot the chune?" he asked.

"Oh, I have the chune all right," Bill answered confidently. "It's the worruds that I'm dubersome about. Do you sing the worruds, Darby, an' I'll sing the chune."

"Bad luck to ye for a forgetful tinker," wailed Darby. "Wirra, wirra, I've forgot the worruds, too."

"Well, by the powers o' pewther! Everything considhered, I think I'd betther make a run for it," Bill qailed. He dropped the pickax. "Look! There's somethin'

movin' over there beyant, in the shadows. It's ayther a lion or a goat. Ye may have my four thurds, Darby. I'm goin'."

For answer, Darby caught his companion's arm with a grip of iron and fastened him there. As the two stood peering intently into the distant corner, suddenly from the shadows just behind— it seemed almost at their very ears— broke a long, sibilant whisper: "Shhh." For an instant, the treasure hunters clung to each other, cowering. Bill was the first to turn and venture a look; and when he did, every hair on his head separated like bristles on a brush, for dimly just outside the circle of holly leaves, stood what seemed the bent figure of an old woman. She wore a long, shimmering cloak that might have been a shroud. The hood was drawn so closely around her head that not one glimpse of the face was visible. Darby couldn't have moved a leg for the County Tipperary. A moment she remained as motionless as one of the slanting tombstones, till, slowly raising a stiff, dead hand, she beckoned the speechless men toward her.

"Come over," she hissed. "Come here, the both of yez, till I whusper where the crocks o' goold are hid. Ye're far from them."

Although Darby's voice came in choking gulps, he made bold to answer: "Thank ye kindly, ma-am, we're in no nade of yer advice, so if ye'll only go back quiet and dacint where ye're berried, we'll think it greatly infatuatin' of ye." It was politeness thrown away. The old woman threw back her head and let a shrieking laugh out of her that curled the leaves on the trees. Now, when an O'Gill grows afraid, he grows angry. "An' if ye're not obligatin' enough to do that little fayver," went on Darby, aroused by the disdainful insult, "then, by the hokey, I'll take one belt at ye wid this shovel, whether or no."

And then, an amazing thing happened. In the snap of a finger, the old woman changed into a raging lion the size of a horse before their bewildered eyes; and giving a roar of fury that sent Bill Donohue a foot up into the air, the great yellow beast went charging around and around the hallowed circle until the watchers grew dizzy following it.

"D'ye think I'd betther throw the spade at her?" asked Darby, swinging it above his head. At those words, the lion began backing toward the farthest corner of the cloister. Suddenly she stopped; and then, after drawing herself together, she made a leap toward the spot where they cowered. The monstrous beast landed with its two front paws almost touching the ring of holly. Then it was that Darby O'Gill, by the dint of his high courage, made himself forever after the proud boast of the village of Ballinderg. Swiftly stooping, the brave man up with a

rock half the size of his head and let fly, striking the snarling creature square between the two blazing eyes.

Maurteen Cavanaugh, the schoolmaster, argues that the welt of a stone couldn't hurt Satan's head because he is a spirit. But Maurteen has no doubt but what the insult must have made Beelzebub dance with fury. At any rate, a bellow of rage answered the blow. Then, swish! the lion was gone, and the brown old woman flashed into its place. Darby stooped for another stone, but as he did so, the frightful old hag, with a great swirl of her long cloak and a wild, shrieking laugh, vanished into the air.

"By this an' that," gasped the knowledgeable man, leaning on his shovel, "who'd have thought that an-ny ould woman could be so shuple as that on her two legs? Come, Bill, now's our chance. Let's dig for our lives."

"They'll be thryin' to dayludher us till after cockcrow," whined Bill.

The tinker took the pickax, the other took the spade, and at it they went with a will. Never before had either of them worked so hard.

Thud, thud, thud! It wasn't long before a great hole loomed in the soft turf. The treasurehunters burrowed on without speaking; the perspiration poured from their faces; an ache came into the small of their backs. Still no sign of the crocks o' goold.

"Well, by the red hemp of Dunleary, if there ain't me two ould friends, Darby O'Gill and Bothered Bill Donohue, the tinker. The top of the avenin' to ye, bhoys! What are ye doin' here?" The tone of the voice was friendly, but when they raised their eyes to see who it was, there in the moonlight stood a terrible figure.

"Darby," gasped Bill, "don't ye know who it is? It's Black Mulligan, the gamekeeper." Black Mulligan stood not ten feet away, his gun at his shouder, the threatening blue barrel pointed at Darby's head.

"Stand aside. Get out of the way, bhoys, or I'll have to shoot through yez," he commanded. "William Fagin, the poacher, is hidin' there behind yez, an' it's him I'm afther. Stand aside or I'll—"

Darby bit his tongue just in time to check the "God save us" that was on his lips, and at the same time, he swung Donohue between himself and the point of the leveled gun barrel. As he did that, there came a quick flash, an awful shriek, and with it, the crashing report of a gun. Our two adventurers dropped to the ground on their faces. Some glint of courage from the fairy's charm must have lingered with them still, for, after a moment or two of stifling silence, Darby had spirit enough left to raise his head and exclaim, "Are ye alive, Bill?"

"How could I be alive?" moaned the tinker. "Isn't this the second time I'm kilt tonight?"

"Then up wid ye, man; it'll be cockcrow before we know it." They went at the digging again, and Bill had not given five good strokes till his pick struck iron.

"The crocks o' goold!" shouted Darby, and the strength returned to their backs, and the power to their arms. No two badgers ever flung dirt with greater speed than did our heroes. Presently the cover of a great black pot began to show itself in the bottom of the hole. "My fortune is made," grunted the tinker. And then Bill's pick, glancing to one side, was answered by another metallic ring which told where a second crock was hidden. At the same moment, Darby exclaimed, "I think there's wan over here undher me feet, Bill, an' the duckens take the bit of me if it isn't filled to the top. Oh, blur-an-ages, look who's comin' at us now."

From the farthest black corner of the cloister walls, up almost to the edge of the protecting holly wreath, stretched a broad path of shimmering green light. Down this mysterious gleaming road stalked a gigantic man, tall as a tree and breathing fire as he came. He was dressed in slithery black from head to foot, his raven hair stood straight on end, his long face was waxen white, and the eyes in his head, large as saucepans, glowed like living coals. There could be no doubt at all but what Satan himself had come visiting. On he strode to within a hand's breadth of the holly wreath, and then he halted with folded arms. All the seething hate and poisonous malice of the world was crowded into his look.

Darby considered, "I have nothing rale personal agin him, and maybe it's just as well to be civil." The lad pulled off his hat and made a scrape of a bow, but he was too flusthered to think of much to say. "The t-t-top of the a-avenin' to yer honor. Isn't it a-a-foine night? I, I niver saw yer lordship lookin' so well. I hear," he quavered, nervously twisting his hat, "that yer honor is havin' gr-reat times wid the Garmin pillosophers, these days. At laste Father Cassidy was sayin' so at chapel only last Sunday."

That proved an aggravating remark. Indeed, at the sound of Father Cassidy's name, a spasm of raging agony convulsed the face of Satan. Sparks of fire spurted from his nostrils, and his checks glowed like red-hot iron. "Don't mention that name," he roared. "He's the worst enemy I have in Ireland ground."

"Why— why don't ye say somethin', Bill?" urged Darby from behind his hat. "The juntleman is lookin' at you. I— I think it's you he's afther."

"I— I— I'm glad to see ye," put in the tinker, his teeth chattering. "N-n-o— I mane, wor ye havin' much rain this sayson down in, in—"

"Have done!" roared Satan, and the walls of the abbey shook. "Out of this place before I wither you up like a blasted tree. What fool's work brought you here?"

"I'm sure yer honor don't begrudge us the few dirthy handsful of goold in the crocks below," said Darby.

"Always the gold," answered Satan. "What good does it bring you, you poor insects of the earth? You snails! You worms! You scurrying gnats!"

As all the world knows, from the time a Tipperary lad is the height of your knee, he is a poor hand at taking an insult. So now Darby's quick temper got the better of his fears, and he warned hotly, "Kape a civil tongue in yer head, Mr. Beelzebub, whativer ye do! I niver done an-nything agin you or yours, did I? I'll make a child's bargain wid ye: D'you lave me alone, an' I'll lave you alone."

"You rubbish!" roared Satan. "You trembling weeds! You little heaps of dust! You bipeds!"

The last epithet proved too much for the prudence of the knowledgeable man. "Biped yerself!" he retorted. "Ye long-legged, goat-futted, chimblypot of a thransgressor! I dare ye to put yer ugly hoof over that holly."

But Darby got no further, for at these words, Satan's rage got something fearful to behold. A moment he beat his breast with his hands, and it clanked like iron, then flung his arms wide apart. At this last gesture, the moon winked out and the night became black as your hat. A mighty wind arose and tore through the old abbey, lashing the yew tree to and fro over their heads. The owls darted this way and that in the sweeping gale, hooting in dismal chorus. In the midst of this whirling confusion exploded the most astonishing wonder of all. The earth cracked open in one wide circle around the now thoroughly subdued men. From this circling crevice, an awful crackling sheet of devouring crimson flame shot up into the sky. Satan, serene and triumphant, stood framed in the center of the blazing cataract.

There is no telling what the end would have been had the tinker kept steadily in his mind the important condition that a person must not utter so much as one pious word while searching for the crocks of gold. It is likely that in ten seconds more, Darby O'Gill with Bothered Bill Donohue, as well as their descendants to come for generations, would have rolled in riches. But the endurance was pretty well shaken out of Bill by this time. He could only throw up his hands and exclaim, "God help us!"

Those were the fateful words. That prayer settled the business of the crocks of gold. Immediately a crash of thunder split the whole world. The sky must have

fallen; the two men went down into the hole like a couple of rocks; the earth heaved and swayed like a billowy sea, and after that, there crashed a deathly silence. Then, clear through the distance from Hooligan's farm, shrilled the warning sound of a crowing cock.

It seemed a full minute before either of our stricken and stunned adventurers got control of himself. Darby was the first to open his eyes and look about. He hadn't heard the cockcrow. "The runneygade is gone! Quick, Bill, the crocks o' goold. Huroo, we're not bate yet!" No wonder Ballinderg is proud of the O'Gills.

But Bill was already on his feet, gazing bewildered at the spot where the wide hole had been. Lo and behold, not only had the crocks vanished, but the hole itself was gone; the place was filled to the top. And this was not all: the buttercups and daisies, without so much as a broken stem, danced nodding and bobbing in the first morning breeze above the spot.

Half an hour after, our two heroic but unfortunate treasure-hunters, loaded to the chin with bedraggled bundles, hesitated, anxious-faced on the threshold of the O'Gill cottage. Bridget, already astir, was busying herself above the hearth. She half-turned from the steaming breakfast to transfix them with a scornful glare. "What kep' yez?" she flung at her husband. Then, from the doorsill where they stood uneasily shuffling, the tired wanderers poured forth together an eloquent account of that night's wonderful adventures. From the beginning to the end of the tangled narrative, Bridget never uttered a single word, but waited with tilted chin motionless on the hearthstone, her hands on her hips.

When the two finished their story, Bridget never moved a muscle of her face, but stood with tightly drawn lips, her eye still fixed on them in a wide, unsympathetic stare. At last she spoke, and at the sudden question she asked them, Darby and Bill took a half-step back from the door:

"How much whiskey have yez left in that jug, Misther O'Gill?"

"I— I— believe it's purty near half-empty," answered Darby, looking accusingly at Bill.

"I didn't," blustered Bill. "Yer husband fell down an' spilled the jug whin he was runnin' from Nial, the fairy, Misthress O'Gill ma-am; an' he busted a lot of the lovely eggs, too, maam. He hut me with one foine egg and spiled a goose."

Bridget didn't say much then. So withering a look settled on her face that one would think that, instead of innocent stirabout that was bubbling in the pot, it was hot, boiling scorn she was turning into the breakfast bowls.

Bridget was a lady of few words, but many a word concerning that night she afterwards with rare judgment managed to scatter through the remaining days of Darby's life.

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## 8: How Satan Cheated Sarah Muldowney

WHETHER it was the onraysonable unscrutableness of Pether Muldowney that first riled up the temper of Sarah Muldowney or whether it was the high-handed obthrusiveness of Sarah Muldowney that started the acraymonious ambayguity in Pether Muldowney, the sorrow one of me knows. Only this is sartin: that same provoking question tossed from family to family from day to day at some time or other, started botheratious disputations under every thatched roof in Ballinthubber.

Now, isn't it a worruld's wondher how the example of the quarrels and contintions of one family will creep sly and unrecognized intil the neighbors' houses, lighting up dissinsions when laste expected? Ould Nick himself from their first falling out med a tool and a torch out of the squabbles of the Muldowneys.

Look how clever Sattin conthrived the McCarthys intil their first blazing althercation! It was one winther's evenin' afther supper when Faylix McCarthy, a proud although at the same time a sinsible, quiet man, contented with the worruld and filled to the chin with peaceable intentions and butthermilk and oatmale stirabout, sat readying his pipe before the sparkling fire. His wife, Julia, brushed around busy washing up the pots and pans and clacking out a bit of a song the while.

"Isn't it a pity," says Faylix, offhanded, "isn't it a shame the way Sarah Muldowney harries and haggles the life out of her husband, Pether?"

Why Julia took offense at thim worruds she never afther could explain.

"Isn't it a shame," says Julia, a bit sharp over her shoulder, "isn't it a pity the way she's druve to it? And isn't it a misfortune," she flashed back at him, "that men are the same the worruld over?"

Up to that minute, yer honor, there wasn't a ha'porth of hard feelings betwixt them. But pushing Faylix down that way into the same place and pit with Pether Muldowney was like touching a sudden red coal to the back of his neck. So he gives his head a sudden jerk up, and then he says, and his hand thrimbled as he put the light into his pipe while he was talking, "I saw Dominic Flaherty this morning and he dhriving his two pigs with a rope on their legs, and the three of them on their way to the butchers at Fethard. The bastes wor pulling, one ayst and the other west, and dodging up every lane and crossroad and into every hole in the hedge. And I says to Dominic, says I, ' 'Tis yerself, Dominic, has as tayjus a job as if ye wor striving to manage a headstrong woman.' "

At that, Faylix guffawed a little forced and aggrayvatin'. Julia didn't laugh. She waited a minute, wiping her bare arms with the dishcloth, her lips tight. Thin she says, "I'll be bound, the likeness ye just give is a foine example. For isn't it the poor wives that, loike those same condemned bastes, are being druve and browbate and parsecuted and disthroyed and kilt intirely all the days of their lives?"

And Faylix answered Julia, but what he said is no matther, for the same or something like it was tould by every other husband in Ballinthubber to his wife while they war disputin' about the Muldowneys, and what Julia said agin to Faylix, sure yer own wife has said to yerself maybe time and agin and what she said, wives'll kape saying to their husbands till the day of judgment.

But no matther which of the Muldowneys was to blame at the beginnin', sure wasn't the counthryside scandalized and heart-scalded at the way they kep' it up till the ind. Discontent grows into a habit; happiness is often a bright habit, and ill-nature is always just a drab habit. And there's some people never exhillerayted onless they've just been slighted or insulted, and there's them agin that in their saycrit heart of hearts find sport and diversion out of a quarrel.

It was like that with the two Muldowneys. Not that they ever lifted a hand to aich other or called hard names outright. As Father Delaney would say, the pair war too scientufic for the loikes of that. There war not two combat'tants in Ireland more ayqual for aich other. It was Pether Napoleon Bonypart Muldowney against Sarah, the Juke of Wellington Muldowney.

Pether was the quiet, careful, cowld-eyed kind. It's seldom he'd say a worrud while Sarah was having her full fling at him. He'd rile the heart in her with his silence. This was his way of fighting. He'd sit calm and agyravatin' at the hearth, his right leg trun over the other, his head slanted to one side, his saygull's icy eyes blinkin' at the rafters, and he humming a bit of a song.

The most cutting, irritaytin' maddening things Sarah's tongue could manage he'd fence back at her by dhroppin' the corners of his lips or winking humorous his eyelids or tossing his shoulders and shutting his eyes. So when she'd get all heated up and bilin' like a taykettle and she'd find that she hadn't raised a hair on him, this is what she'd do, and it inded the quarrel: Sarah would go out into the road and stand weeping and crying over her gate. If any passing sthranger or neighbor would stop to ask her grief, all she'd say was, "Go in an' ask himself! I'll not tell on him, since whatever he's done, he's me wedded husband!"

Ye'll say that Pether was clever, and indade, he had to be so, for it was a toss-up betwixt them as to which had the most injaynius tictacks.

The most valuable thing I've learned since ever I was able to whirl me two fists before me face in a battle is to beware of an enemy that smiles when he fights, and Sarah was a swate-worded smiler. Though her temper was sharp as a knife and hot as a flame of candle, she'd smile a harmless-sounding question at anyone. That same question was dangerous as the jagged razor me own wife cuts the thread with: however careful I shave, I'm sure to put a gash on meself afther. If Pether'd try to answer one of Sarah's questions, whichever way he'd rayply, he'd cut himself to the bone.

A woman may trajuce a man about his shortcomings till she's black in the face, and he'll maybe hould himself in, but the minute his wife begins trajucing her husband's relaytions, it's few husbands can stand that and stay peaceable. Sarah had a jaynus for columniaytion of the breed and brood of the Muldowney's. It's often she bested him that way outrayjous, and when she'd see Pether's face grow scarlet, she'd know she'd won.

The way the last quarrel started betwixt them was this away: For a week, the two had been cooing and fluthering about aich other like a pair of turtledoves. Of a wet Monday morning afther breakfast, they war sitting looking at the lowering clouds and listening to the abusive chilling winds that came hollerin' down the chimney.

"It's a dayspictable thing," he says, "to be shut up in the house on a day like this with no one to talk to."

Of course, he didn't mane it althogether as bad as it sounded, but he didn't say it quite pleasant for all that— just a thrifle peevish. No one could tell by lookin' at Sarah how the woman was bridlin' when she heard that raymark, for she only rocked back and forth a little faster in the rush chair, smiling before she spoke.

Sarah knew that Pether hated to be corrected in his prowninciation, especially when he was feeling a bit sour over something else. It's belittling to anyone at any time. And Sarah was altogether too clever for a front attack on Pether, so she kem at him from this wake side. "Don't say 'dayspictable,' Pether avourneen," she smiled. "It sounds so wulger. Say 'dayspictatory'!"

"I said 'dayspicatory'; I never said 'dayspictatable' in me loife," answered Pether. Well, the argyment begun and from argyment to battle never amounted to more than a short step.

That last time Sarah got worsted bad, so what does the woman do but jump furious from the chair and pack up in a bundle all the clothes she had in the worruld— and it wasn't such a killin' big bundle at that— and with her foot on the

thrashold and a hand on the latch, it's what she said to her husband: "To the ructions I pitch you, and all the Muldowneys: and hadn't one of my daycint bringing up the hard luck to marry into such a family of good-for-nothing tinkers! And I'm off now over the mountains to my sister Peggy, who had the luck and the grace to marry into the rayspectable family of the O'Callaghans."

She shut the door quick then, the way she wouldn't be giving him the satisfaction of hearing the answer himself'd make; but she was sorry for that afther, bekase, as she wint thrudging up the road, she heard Pether back in the house roaring and screechin' with the laughter at some of his jokes an' thin the heart was fair burning out of her to know what owdacious slandher the rapscallion had med up and said about her.

But for all that, Sarah never turned her head; she only guv her petticut another hitch an', with her chin up in the air an' her best foot for'rad, marched on like a major down the road.

Didn't I meself heard Father Cassidy say from the altar only last Sunday that there wasn't a lazy bone in Sattin's body; that night and day, the Ould Boy never slept but conthrivin' against and temptin' everyone in the world, and particular the Irish. And as Mrs. Murtaugh and meself were walkin' down the lane from the chapel that day, my wife says to me— yer honor knows that Mrs. Murtaugh was an O'Grady and that the O'Gradys the world over are faymous for their wise cogitaytions and wonderful concatinaytions— she says, "Isn't it a pity and a scandal, Jerry Murtaugh, that whin the Satalites are by night and by day lepping and limber and ayger afther yer own immortal sowl, and you to be using the bad langwidge ye did yestherday whin the pony kicked ye in the knee?"

With that, she turned facing me in the lane and pinted a warnin' finger at me chist. "Jerry Murtaugh," she says, "ye're gettin' as free and careless about yere precious sowl as if it only belonged to a common Far Down or a Connaught man." And by that, she put a seriousness on me that I feel in me bones this minute.

Faix, when I've finished aylucidating to ye what happened to the Muldowneys, yer Honor'll say, too, "Ah, thin, isn't Father Cassidy the larned man, and isn't Mrs. Jerry Murtaugh the deep rayligious woman!"

Well, as I was telling you: it wasn't her prayers that Sarah was sayin' ayther, as she wint whirling along, though she might betther have been doing that same (for the road before her was wild and lonesome enough, and many's the turrible tale was told about it), but instid of doing that, every har-rd word and scorching wish she could lay her tongue to, Sarah was pelting at the image in her mind of her husband, Pether.

"Oh, wasn't I the bostheen of a fool to be wastin' me chanst on him an' the loikes of him— I that had ivery boy in the parish afther me. But I'm done with him now. And I wish I was Sayzer's wife, so I do, so I could turn him into a pillow of salt, the big lazy sturk, I'd— I'd sell him to Sattin for sixpence this minnit, so I would."

The words were no sooner out of her mouth than pop! a wondherful thing happened. Believe me or believe me not, but it's no lie I'm tellin' ye: the road in front of her shplit in two halfs accrass, and the ground opened before her, and up through the crack sprung a tall, dark, slim, illigant-lookin' juntleman, an' the bow that he med there in the middle of the road was ayquil to the curtchy of a Dublin dancin' masther.

For a minute, Mrs. Muldowney could do nothin' but ketch her breath an' stare at him with every eye in her head, an' she said aftherwards that he was the foinest lookin' mortial man she iver set her two livin' eyes on, barrin' her own first cousin, Tim Conners.

He was dhressed from head to foot in glossy black. His knee breeches were of satin, an' his swallowtail coat an' low weskit were of shiny broadcloth. There would be no manner of doubt in the mind of any sinsible person who it was. Sattin himself stood ferninst her. But Sarah Muldowney came and sprung from the proud conquering race of the Fogartys on her mother's side, and the world can tell the Fogartys know no fear.

Clicking his heels together again, the juntleman med a second polite bow and then spoke in a deep solemn voice: "The top of the day to ye, Mrs. Muldowney ma'am," says he. "I didn't hear quite plain the price you was settin' on your husband, Pether. I'll pay you any raysonable sum for him, an' it'll be cash on the nail, ma-am. So spake up!"

To be sure, while you'd be giving two winks of your eye, Mrs. Muldowney was flusthrated. But it's she was the woman that was quick at a bargain, and handy at turning a penny. And now was her chanst.

"I was just sayin' that I'd sell him to Sattin for one pound tin this minute. An' by the same token, who are you, sir, that comes poppin' up out of the lonesome road like a jack in-the-box, frightenin' daycint women out of their siven wits? I said two pounds tin, that's what I said."

"It's little matther what me name is, Sarah Muldowney," spoke up the juntleman. "You'll be introjuced to me proper enough afther a while. For the prisint, it's satisfied yez'll have to be to know that I'll buy Pether from ye, an' I'll

pay ye the two pound tin in goold suverings the succond ye hand him into me power. Are ye satisfied?"

Now, the good woman, seeing how aisy Sattin was with his money, felt the heart inside of her scorching up with vexation to think she'd named so small a sum, so shaking her head slow and sorrowful, it's what she said: "Throth, thin, I'm not satisfied. You have no idee how lonesome I'd be without Pether an' what I'll do at all, at all the sorrow one of me knows. An' will ye hurry up now with your answer, for if any one of the neighbors were to see the both of us collogueing out here together, I wouldn't give a button for me repitation. So if ye're willin' to give the three pounds tin—"

"What!" shrieked the dark man, an' he guv a lep up intil the air. "Three pound tin, ye schaymer of the worruld, ye said one pound tin at first."

"Tin fiddle-sthicks! Three pound tin and not a fardin' less. An' how dare the loikes of you be callin' a daycint woman loike me a schaymer," she shouted, clapping one hand in the other undher the nose of the sthranger, an' she follyin' him as he backed step by step from her in the road. "Kape a civil tongue in yer head while ye're talking to a lady, or I'll malevogue ye, so I will."

"Hould where ye are, Mrs. Muldowney," said the flustherayted man, and he backed up agin a rock. "I'll own I was a thrifle quick-tempered, but I meant no offense, ma'am, an' if you'll bring Pether to this spot on the morning of the morrow and hand him over to me here, I'll guv ye the three pounds tin down on the nail."

So Sarah waited for no more, but off she skelped and, without stopping to ketch her breath, hurried by every short path till she came in sight of her own door. Then the clever woman slackened her pace, the way she would be thinking and planning out some nate, cunning schame to deludher her husband into going with her on the morrow.

Just as Sarah left Pether in the mornin', that's the way she found him whin she opened the door; with his two feet upon the fender and his hands deep in his breeches pockets. "Pether avourneen," she says, and you'd think butther wouldn't melt in her mouth, her worruds were that swate. "Pether," says she, "it's a foine job of worruk I have for ye up the mountainy way."

"Have ye now?" grunted Pether without lookin' round. "Well, I wouldn't be puttin' it past ye. It'll rain tomorrow or maybe even snow, so kape the foine job for yerself. Think shame on ye, woman, to be sendin' yer own husband out into the cowld an' the wet to be ketchin' his death from the dampeness."

"Oh no, wait till ye hear what it is," chuckled Sarah, as she untied her cloak and hung it careful on a peg behind the dure. "It's dhry as a bone an' snug and warrum as a roasted petatie ye'd be."

Pether cocked his ear in lazy curiosity. "I wondher!" was all he said.

"But maybe I'd betther not tell ye what it is," Sarah wint on, "bekase it's a job for a sober, daycint man; there's such a temptation for the dhrink in it, so I think I'll be givin' it to Ned Hanrahan."

Pether straightened his back at that an' took his hands out of his pockets. "Tut, tut, what's that ye're sayin?"

"I was sayin'," herself answered careless, readying the pot for the petaties, "that little Michael Callahan will be movin' his still from Chartre's wood to a foine cave up in the mountain, an' he wanted the two of us to help him. He has two cartloads of kegs and one of bottles and jugs, and all of them filled with the foinest of mountain dew. But of course you wouldn't want to be doing the loikes of that."

Pether was on his two feet in an instant, ivery hair on his head brustlin'.

"Death alive, woman!" he cried. "You'll be the ind of me one of these days. Sthop that hugger-muggerin' an' hurry the supper an' hurry on with me now, or he'll have someone else in our places." From the minute he got Sattin's message, a raymarkable change kem over the lad; he lost every tinge of his onscrutableness.

It took all the wit and injaynuity of Sarah Muldowney to kape her husband Pether in the house till the mornin' of the morrow. And thin, at the first shriek of day, they were off together, he flyin' up the road with all the strength in his legs, an' she pelthin' afther him. The two of them nayther sthopped nor stayed till they came within sight of the Devil's Pool, and there, by the powers, standin' in the middle of the road, straight as a ramrod, with his arrums fowlded, stood the polite dark juntleman.

Whin our two hayros came up to him, Sarah took Pether by the arrum the way she would be houldin' him back, an' it's what she said to him: "Pether darlint, this is the juntleman I was tellin' ye about who has the foine daycint job of worruk for ye to do."

Pether glowered, dumbfounded, from one to the other. "Michael Callaghan, ye said! Well the Divil himself is in it if this long-legged rapparee is little Michael Callaghan!"

At those worruds, the dark man put his hand on his chist and bowed.

"I don't blame ye, Misther Muldowney, for bein' a thrifle surprised," he said, with a sootherin' smile like a peddler's, "but to tell ye the truth, your good wife and meself med a pleasant little bargain about ye."

The next minute, Pether was rubbing his eyes, thinkin' he was in a dhrame, for what did he see but his own wife, Sarah, go smirking up to the dark sthranger, an' whin she did that, he saw that same juntleman houlding out half the full of his hat of silver shillings to her, and whin she'd dhropped the last one of thim into her petticut pocket, it's what she said: "Yes, Pether asthore, the kind juntleman offered me three pounds tin for ye, an' I tuck it. An' he wouldn't give a penny more for ye, an' I wouldn't take a penny less."

"An' now, Misther Muldowney," says the juntleman, "since ye're paid and settled for, fair and honest, will ye plaze put on that shuit of clothes that's lyin' there on the ground beside ye, an' we'll be off together."

Looking to where Sattin pointed, Pether an' Sarah spied a shuit of clothes made of iron an' it sizzling red-hot in the grass with the flamin' sparks coming out of the armholes of the weskit.

Oh, thin wasn't Muldowney indignant. "So this is the foine, dhry, warrum job yez have for me, is it?" he says, nodding sarcastic toward the shuit. "Well, before I put on thim clothes, will somewan plaze expatiate to me whereabouts in the bounds of mathrimony it says that the faymale partner has the mortial right to sell her husband's four bones to Beelzebub?"

That pint of law sthruck Mrs. Muldowney and Sattin flat; an' for a minute they could only stand gawpin' at aich other.

"Would ye be goin' back on the bargin your wife med, shameless man? Would ye be makin' little of her givin worrud? Are ye a man or a mouse, I dunno?" he says.

"It'd be just like him to be makin' little of me," snuffled Mrs. Muldowney.

"An' if it comes to that," blustered Sattin, "if anyone was goin' to sell ye, will ye tell us who had a betther right to do it than yer own wife? You an' your pints of law! Didn't Joseph's brothers put sivin coats on him an' sell him for a mess of porridge to the Aygyptians? Answer me that," Sattin cried, triumphant.

At that, he swelled out his chist an' took a deep, proud breath till the stomachs of him glowed red like a furnace.

"Oh hasn't he the larning!" cried Sarah. "Why don't ye spake up, Pether Muldowney— haven't ye the face to say that Lanty and Cornalious, thim two bagabones of brothers of yours have more right to sell ye than I have?"

"How d'ye know they were goin' to sell me?" cried poor Pether. "An' I don't know anything about Joseph an' his sivin coats of colors an' his mess of porridge, but I do know that the price of three pounds tin on me head is belittlin' an' insultin' to a Muldowney. Ye shouldn't have taken a penny less nor six pounds for me, so ye shouldn't, he says, turnin' hot on Sarah. You an' your little three pounds tin! Sure, didn't Teddy Nolan only yisterday get foive pound eight for the fractious red cow that used to be jumpin' the hedges an' ateing the cabbages. To think that a Muldowney wouldn't bring as much as an ould cow," he said, halfcryin' with wexation.

While Pether was saying thim things, a new idee came to Sarah, an' it's what she said: "There's rayson in what he says, Sattin. Pether may not be worth six pounds tin, but you might well have guv it."

"He that has all the riches of the say at his disposhiall," chimed in Pether, raysentful.

Sattin stood lookin' from one til the other, his eyes bulgin' and his jaws dhroppin'.

"Thrue for ye, Pether," spoke up Sarah, bridlin'. "I'm beginning to think that the schaymer has chayted us."

"I'll not stir a foot with him," says Pether dayfiant, claspin' his two hands behind his back.

Sarah sidled over to her husband.

"Small blame to ye if ye don't," says she, "afther the way he's thrated us. Will ye give us the six pounds?" says she. "Don't go with him, Pether, if he belittles ye," she says.

"Why," says Sattin, "you owdacious ringleader of a woman!"— an' the eyes of him were blazing with angry astonishment—"ye offered to sell him to me for sixpence. I heard ye well, though I purtended not to."

"I didn't!" shouted Mrs. Muldowney, her two fists on her hips.

"Ye did, ye runnygade!" roared Sattin, an' the breath came puffing out of him in blue smoke.

"Oh, vo! vo! Will ye listen to what he's afther callin' me! Oh, thin, Pether Muldowney," she says, turning bitter on her husband, "aren't ye the foine figure of a man to be standin' there in the middle of the road like a block of wood listening to this sheep-staylin', undherhanded, thin-shanked, antherntarian thrajucing yer own wedded wife, and you not lifting a finger till him! If ye wor

worth two knots of sthraw, ye'd break ivery bone in his body!" says she, beginning to shumper.

I know the saying is that to be quick in a quarrel is to be slow in a fight. One who is clever with his fists isn't handy with his tongue. Such a one is like cantankerous little Manus Hannigan, who makes the boast that he has started more fights and fought less himself than any other man in the Province of Munster. But it wasn't that way at all with Pether. Such a rayproach of backwardness never darkened the honor of any of the Muldowneys. The lad was ready with his fists and as proud of them as is the juty of every Tipperary man to be. So at the taunting of his wife, every drop of blood in Pether's body flared up intil his face, and what does he do but rowl up the wristbands of his jacket an' go squaring off at Sattin in the middle of the road.

"Before we begin," says Beelzebub— an' there was an anxious shadow came intil his eyes, for the Muldowneys as far back as anyone can raymimber were renowned gladiathors—"before we attack aich other," says he quick, side-steppin' an' backing away from Pether, "do you bear in mind that she thried to sell ye to me for sixpence."

Sarah hid her face in her apron, an' she wailed, "Oh, murdher asthore, will ye listen to that! I didn't, Pether! An' what's his repitation for voracity agin my repitation?"

At the mintion of his repitation, it was plain to be seen that Sattin winched.

"Will ye guv me back me three pounds tin, ye robber of the worruld?" says he, thrimbling with anger.

"Tut tut!" cried Sarah, tossin' her head. "We hear ducks talkin'. Didn't I kape me part of the bargain?" says she. "Isn't Pether there in the road ferninst ye? Why don't ye take him?" Beelzebub had no time for rayply, bekase Pether, with his two big fists flying around and round aich other, was dancing forward and back, and circling from the right to the left, and this way and that, whichever way Sattin twisted himself, an' all the time makin' false lunges at the middle of the black lad's chist.

"Howld still, Pether Muldowney, unfortunate man!" cried Sattin, all out of breath. "Do ye see Father Delaney comin' down the road behind ye?"

At that, Pether and Sarah turned to look, and as they did, crack! they heard the ground open, an' before they could twist their heads round again, Sattin was gone.

The two hayros stood a minute, gaping at the spot where the inimy of mankind had disappeared. Sarah was the first to speak, an' it's what she said, taking hould of Pether by the arrum: 'Come on home, avic! Did ye see how the conniving villyun thried to chate us? Oh, but ye're the brave lad! Give me yerself yit!"

With that, the two of them, arrum in arrum, as loving as a couple of turtledoves, wint down the road together, an' they never sthopped till they came to the big, flat stone by O'Hanrahan's spring; thin a sudden fear took the breath out of Sarah.

"I niver counted the shillings whin the ould targer handed thim to me," she says, "and how do I know whether he counted thim right? It'd be just loike one of his thricks not to."

"We'll sit right down here on the rock, an' we'll reckon thim together before we go a step furder," says Pether, anxious.

And so they did. And Sarah made a wide lap to hould the money, but with her hand over her pocket, she hesitated a moment, for her mind misgave her that something was wrong. An' sure enough, the two poor crachures got a bad turn, for whin Sarah pulled out a handful of the money, it wasn't money at all, at all, that was in it, but only a fistful of bits of broken glass. An' whin she had her pocket emptied, the sorra thing was there but a lap full of broken bottles.

While the pair of thim, blazin' with anger, sat staring at aich other with faces red as a couple of thrumpeters, far down the road split the wild screech of a laugh.

"D'ye heard him there?" whuspered Sarah. "Oh, the dasayver of the worruld! D'ye think if ye were to slip back, ye might ketch him, Pether?"

Pether shook his head, and a throubled frown wrinkled his forehead.

"I misdoubt it," says he, "an' besides, I was just thinkin' what'll become of us all, at all whin he ketches the both of us on the day of judgment. I hate to be thinkin' of it," he says.

"Oh ho, have no fear, Pether avic," says Sarah, soothin'. "I've hit on a jewel of a schayme that'll break the black heart of him, an' it's this: Do you Pether asthore, lave off the onscrutableness an' answer me back once in a while, an' as for meself, you'll niver hear anither crass worrud out of me two lips till the day I'm buried, onless ye dayserve it. An' now, Mr. Sattin, what d'ye think of that?" says she, shakin' her fist down the road.

Pether gave his knee a thraymendous slap. "Oh, ye phaynix of a woman!" says he. Wid that, he laned over an' guv her a kiss on the lips that might have been heard three fields away.

"That's the first in fufteen years," says he, "but it'll not be the last by any manner of manes; bekase I think the Divil niver comes betwixt a man an' his wife tell they lave off kissin' aich other."

"Arrah, go on, ye rogue!" says Sarah, smilin' an' givin' him a poke wid her elbow. "Come along home now; I'll put on the kettle, an' we'll begin all over again from this day out."

And they riz up thin and started for home, but afther a step or two, Pether turned and shook his fist down the road.

"Oh, aren't ye the outraygeous, chaytin', dispectable villyun!" he shouted. "No, I mane dayspictory," he corrected himself.

"Ye never said 'dayspictable' at all," soothed his wife. "Ye said 'dayspictatory' the first time ye mintioned it," she says.

There's many a couple believe that when they've had a bad quarrel, they're ruined and kilt forever. Only yestherday morning, Bridget Cronin, twistin' up her hair with thremblin' fingers, rushes over to me own wife and she says, savage, "I'm going over to me own mother's house and take the childher. I'll not live another day undher the same roof with Marty," she rages.

"Why, thin, what murthering thransaction has poor Marty done?" asks me wife, wondhersthruck, for Marty is the broth of a lad.

"Why, this avening, the baby was peevish, and by accident, I let the stirabout scorch in the pot and the petatie cake burn a bit in the ashes. An' what do ye think he says to me at last? Why, that he'd betther be bringing his own mother over to tache me how to manage. He said that, Mrs. Murtaugh, an' all I've done for that man! Do ye think I ought to lave two of the childher with him? He's so fond of Eileen, and he'll be that lonesome avenin's," she says, beginning to cry. "I wisht I was dead; thin he'd see," she sobbed.

And Marty stood inside the byre, leaning on his arrums over the stone wall, glooming down intil the road with a face on him as if he wor looking at thim shoveling clay down on his own coffin, whin ould Mordacai Cannon, hobbling up, axed him, "Is there anyone sick in the house, Marty?"

"No, it's a dale worse nor sickness," mourned Marty. "Sickness can be cured," he says, lifting open jaws up to the sky. "Bridget has just tould me she didn't love me, an' would hate the ground I'd walk on till she died. If it warn't for the childher, I wouldn't care a rap what happened to me."

And Mordacai caught him by the sleeve and led him, shamefaced, intil the house and thin hobbled over and led Bridget, crying, intil the house, an' he waited a minute till he saw the two of them standing houlding aich other tight in the middle of the kitchen, and he went down the lane on his shaky legs, chucklin' to himself. "They wor wantin' to die!" he crowed.

Whin Marty, fifteen minutes afther, went out into the fields, light as a skylark, two long tear sthreaks ran, the one on ayther side of his nose, the length of his face.

Sure, isn't it the rain that sweetens the green-growing world, and that's the way it is, yer honor. Sure, afther a quarrel, all the couple nade do is to raymimber that love is worth more than pride. I meself heard a middle-aged, sinsible-looking man sitting in this same jaunting car, boasting that he and his wife never had a cross word in all their lives. "God pity ye," says I.

For I knew it's little happiness two could have living together all their lives who had as little deep feeling one for the other as never to touch a sensitive narve.

So, although the Muldowneys rayformed entirely, still and all they had their fallin's out. Only Sarah never scolded Pether afther that day, except when she thought he dayserved it, and undher them sarcumstances, all sensible wives should do that same, and whin she did begin on her husband, she 'rated him in a hot-tempered, outspoke tongue-lashin' way, as was her natural ordinary jooty.

As for Pether, whether he dayserved the lambasting he got or not, he never again met it with smirks an' smilin's an' shrugs an' onscrutableness, but with beggings off an' excuses an' barefaced daynials, as any level-headed, sinsible, wife-fearing husband is expected to do, and if they didn't live peaceable all the days of their lives afther, at any rate, they lived happy and continted.

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## 9: Patrick of the Bells

IT'S many's the fine tale concerning the stormy disputes that raged between great Patrick of the Bells and Oisin, the mighty son of Finn MacCumhull, that the learned clerics of Ireland used to be writing down in their thick leather books; and it's many's the account of the wonderful deeds wrought by Patrick that these same ancient clerics used to be putting there, too— for it's given up by every one that Patrick of the Bells was the greatest saint that ever lived in the whole world for the working of miracles.

Wasn't it he that, by the ringing of his bell, drove the seventy-times-seven demons from the bald top of Cruachmaa and put them prisoners in the bottom of the Well of the End of the World? And wasn't it he that banished into the depths of the green, shuddering ocean the writhing serpents, and crawling vipers, and every kind of venomous thing that infested the pleasant land of Ireland? And wasn't it he, as well, that stopped the black famine there, by making the grass to grow again in the blighted fields, by putting the swift-gleaming fish into the gray, silent streams, and by filling with sweet milk the dried udders of the kine? But greater than all these marvels, I think, was the miracle Patrick wrought upon the pagan chieftain Oisin, and that is what I am going to tell you about now.

Hundreds of years before St. Patrick first came to Ireland— and it's hundreds and hundreds of years ago entirely that was— Finn MacCumhull and the warriors of the Fianna ruled from their king's dun at Almhuin, over the pleasant province of Leinster. Threescore captains there were of the Fianna, and fivescore champions followed every captain when he went to the wars; and the like of them for heroes the world has never seen before nor since.

There was among them there Caol, the hundred-wounder, who, from the rising to the setting of the sun, on each one of five days fought with the giant Cathaeir of the speckled ships, and killed him after; and there was Faolan the manly, who slew in one combat the seven brave sons of Lochlin; and Goll the mighty; and Diarmuid the brown-haired, beloved of women; and mighty Oscar of the strokes, son of Oisin, who slew the King of Munster and Cairbre of the silken standard on the same day.

There were among the captains, too, Glas; and Gobha the generous; and Caolite of the flaming hair, whose feet could outrun the west wind; and Conan Moal, the giver of curses, whose words were more biting than the east wind in winter; and Feargus the nimble; and Conn of the sharp green spears; and Ronan,

who with his well-tempered blade could pierce an oak-tree; and there were many others, too, of renown, of whom I have not time to be telling you. But the like of them all for heroes the world never saw before nor since. Seven feet tall was Minne, the smallest of them all, and the handle of his spear was just a young ash-tree. By that you may know what the others were like. Many's the grand song has been made up about them by the ancient bards of Ireland.

For grace and courtesy, for strength in battle, for swiftness in hunting, for skill in making melodious music, there was not the like of the Fianna in all Ireland, and if not in Ireland, why, then, of course, never by any chance at all in any other country of the world.

And, as it's one above the others there must always be whenever three men come together, so, among the Fianna, next in favor and in merit to the great chief Finn there was always standing comely Oisin of the strong hand. Son of Finn MacCumhull himself was he, and his mother was the goddess Sadb, daughter of Rodb the Red. Great was the beauty of Oisin and his fame was over the four kingdoms of Ireland. He could jump over a branch as high as his forehead, and stoop under one as low as his knee, and he running at full speed; and he could pluck a thorn out of the heel of his foot at the same time without hindrance to his flight.

On a day at the court of Teamhair, in the presence of the five kings and the five queens of Ireland, the three caskets of honor were given without lessening to Oisin by Cormac, the high king. The first casket held the five silver lilies of courtesy, which meant mercy to the conquered, hospitality to the stranger, charity for the poor and distressed, gentleness to old men and children, and white homage to women; the second casket contained the five bronze nuts of learning, which signified skill in fighting, sleight in wrestling, swiftness in hunting, caution in chess-playing, and sweet cunning in the making of melodious songs; and the third casket held three golden apples, which signified courage in danger, faith in friendship, and truth in speaking. And no other man before or since ever got those three caskets at one time without lessening.

So, no wonder at all it was that Niahm of the golden hair, who was the daughter of the king of the Country of the Young, fell into conceit with the great fame of Oisin, and journeyed all the way to Ireland for love of him; and no sooner did Oisin set his eyes on Niahm of the golden hair than he loved her with every vein of his body, and it's what he said to her:

"From this day out I will have neither ease of mind nor peace of heart until your life is the same as my life; and for me there's no other woman in the world but you, O woman of the deep-shining eyes!"

For answer, Niahm bent down from the white horse on which she rode, and kissed him on the forehead and on the eyes, and this is what she said:

"There is many a king's son has paid court to me, O Oisin of the comely brow, but it's to you I give my heart, and to no other. And it's to take you back with me to my father's country I have come, bringing the white horse of magic for our journey; and if you love me as you say, you will come up now and sit behind me here."

So he did that, and the great white horse turned his face to the western sea. And when Finn saw this, he raised three shouts of sorrow: "My woe and my grief! O Oisin, my son, to be going away from me this way! for I know you will never return."

But the white steed never stayed nor stopped, but rose to meet the green combing waves and leaped in to them, and the people of the Fianna saw them no more. And Niahm and the warrior went their way together on the horse of magic over the high-tossing sea and under the dark-running waves toward the Country of the Young.

And as they were going along that way in the shining afternoon of the day, a hornless fawn leaped suddenly up on top of the waves before them, and a red-eared white hound was chasing it. And straightway Oisin, the great hunter, was eager to follow in the chase; but it's what Niahm told him, that these forms running before them were only the creatures of the Sidh, and what they were trying was to lure him from her, the way he would be destroyed in the strong green waves. So, hearing that, Oisin turned his eyes away. Presently, again, a young maid came riding by on a brown steed, and oh, it's she that was beautiful! Her chalk-white skin was like the swan's breast as he plumes himself on the clear waters of Loch Dearg; her lips were the color of rowan-berries; and her hair was just a golden cloud on her shoulders.

In her right hand she held an apple of green gold; and it was fast she rode, throwing many a look of terror behind the while.

Close after her a youth came riding on a slim white steed; from his shoulders floated a mantle of crimson-red satin, and he was holding a naked sword in his hand.

At that Oisin's hand was on the bridle-rein and his sword was almost from its scabbard, when Niahm quickly warned the champion to pay no heed, for no

danger at all was on the maid, but it was she who was no other than the hornless fawn that went past them a minute before, and the youth with the naked sword was that same white hound with the red ear.

As Niahm was saying this, the maid with the golden apple turned, laughed mockingly, and then she and the youth sank together into the sea.

Many other things of wonder Oisin saw on that journey; but the white steed never changed his course nor stayed nor halted till at length and at last it reached the shores of the Country of the Young. There, in the great palace of that land, the king and the queen gave to their daughter Niahm, and to comely Oisin of the sword, a hundred thousand welcomes.

Some of the poets were saying that it was three hundred years that Oisin lived with his beautiful wife Niahm and their children, and other poets used to be saying that it was five hundred years that he remained there. But, however long it was, one thing is sure: that he didn't feel the time passing, nor did he dream how long he had been away from his own land. For in the Country of the Young there is neither age nor sickness nor wasting nor dying, but always feasting and music and hunting and warriors contending one with the other.

And so it was that presently all the recollections of green Erin and of the old life there were driven from his memory by the magic of his beautiful queen, and he was going on forever after, happy and contented with the feasting of today and the hunting of to-morrow. But, if Oisin had forgotten the house of his father, the fame of the warrior still lingered on the misty hills and in the wide valleys of his own country; for the bards of Ireland never left off singing of the brave deeds of the exile and of his comeliness and of his high honor.

And this is the way it was with them when Patrick of the Bells came over to Ireland to preach the true faith to the people. And after a while it came about that Patrick loved to be listening to these old songs of brave deeds; for in his heart of hearts a great saint is neither more nor less than a warrior, only that it is against himself his arms are turned.

And one evening, as Patrick sat listening to Cinnfaela, son of Oilill, and he singing the lay of "The Battle of Cnoc-an-Air," a strange wish crept into the saint's mind, and then it grew into his heart; and the wish was no less than that he might bring Oisin back across the western sea from the Country of the Young and baptize him, and so save the hero's soul for heaven.

And so, for many a day, the saint prayed for this at matins and at vespers. But whether what happened was in answer to the prayer will never be rightly known; be that as it may, one thing is certain: On a day, as Oisin and his young men were

coming home from the hunt, a great red cloud of Druid mist settled on the side of the hill before them, and out of the middle of the cloud a sweet-sounding harp began playing, and the heart of Oisin stood still, for he knew it to be Suanach, son of Senshenn, who was in it playing, and the song that Suanach sang was the lament for the death of Oscar.

And straightway a sudden famishing for a sight of the wide green hills of Ireland and a hungry yearning for the sound of the long-forgotten voices took the strength from Oisin's limbs, and the enchantment fell from his eyes. When he came up to Niahm, it's what he said:

"O Niahm, queen with the sweet voice, my breast is like an empty plover's nest, for the heart that was in it has flown over the seas to Ireland, and I think I shall die now of the lonesome sickness that is on me for a sight of my people."

And she answered him and she said: "Ah, then, it's the sorrowful word you're bringing to me this day, husband of my heart, going away that way, and it's maybe never coming back to me."

"Haven't we still the white horse of magic," he said, "to bring me back safe again to you? The thought of my people is like a burning coal in the middle of my brain."

And it's what Niahm said: "There is grief before you where you are going, comely Oisin, for not one you ever cared for is alive this day to welcome you back to green Ireland. Great Finn and his champions are lying under the heavy stones these hundreds of years. Even the old gods have gone from there. A stranger from Rome with book and bell has banished them, and the faces of the hills are cold and strange. But I give you leave to go, for when the home longing comes into a man's heart, all the waters of the world will not quench its burning."

And Oisin could not believe that the great Finn was dead, and it's what he thought, that it was only the tenderness and the love that was in the heart of Niahm for him that made her, after the way of women, speak what was not true. But it's what he did: he took Niahm, his queen, up in his arms, and strove to comfort her, and it's she that cried her fill. By and by she spoke, and this is the warning she gave to him then:

"Remember, O Oisin, what I'm telling you now: if you but touch your foot to level ground you will never come back to me. And I say to you again— and harken with every vein of your body, my husband: it's danger there is for you in every blade of grass and in every leaf on the bough when once you leave the Country of the Young. And a third time I warn you: if once you leave the horse's back, or touch hand or foot to the ground of Ireland, from that moment out your magic

youth will fall from you, and you will be old and shrunken and sightless, and there will be no strength in your limbs, and the blood in your veins will turn to water, and death's hand will be on your shoulder. Ochone, mavrone, my grief and my woe, it's well I know you will never come back to us!"

When Oisin fronted the white horse of magic to the sea, Niahm gave a great cry of sorrow; and when he leaped into the waves, it is kneeling on the white desolate sand she was, beating the palms of her hands and keening bitterly, like one crying over the face of the dead. And that is how it happened that a mortal brought the first sorrow into the Country of the Young.

Oisin never looked back, but went as swift as the wind over the high-tossing sea and under the dark-running waves till he came to his own fair country of Ireland. And when he came into that land there was great wonder on him, for the duns of the kings and of the chiefs had disappeared altogether, and the people had dwindled in size till the tallest man of them could walk upright under Oisin's arm. And they stared at him with round eyes, and the women gathered their children and ran from him as if he were a god and it were from the Tuatha de Danaan he was coming. And he asked a man of them: "Where is Finn MacCumhull hunting the day?"

And it's what the man said, he stammering with his wonder: "There is no such man in Ireland now; but hundreds of years ago there was a great champion named Finn MacCumhull, and he was the head chief of the Fianna; and the poets have songs about him, and they do be saying that he was the greatest hero that ever lived in Ireland."

And a cold dread came on Oisin, and it's what he said: "And had he a son named Oisin?"

"And the poets do be singing of him, too," the man said, "of how he went with Niahm, the golden-haired, across the seas to the Country of the Young, and how he never came back. But don't be giving much heed to those old pishrogues, for I don't think they can be true."

Then Oisin asked about Caolite, and Diarmuid, and Goll, and Lugaidh's son; but the man only stared and made a swift crossing sign on his forehead, and walked quickly away. And the people fled, every one, leaving the great, strange man and the white horse standing alone on the roadside.

And a blast of loneliness, fierce as a sweep of storm from the ocean, smote Oisin, so that for a time he had no care to live. But presently from the moor a curlew began calling, and the bird's note put a thought of the great marsh about the dun at Almhuin into him, and it's to himself he said:

"I will go up into Leinster; I will go up to the dun of my father at Almhuin."

With that, he lifted the bridle-rein over the neck of the white horse of magic, and they went like the wind, without stopping, until they came to Leinster and to the hill of Almhuin. And when they came to the hill of Almhuin it was a sorrowful, woeful sight that lay before him; for the broad hillside was bare, the walls of the great dun had been leveled to the ground, and the tall weeds were blowing and nodding above the scattered stones. That is how he found the home of his people. But it's when he came to the wide, bare spot where the feasting-hall used to be standing, and to the great black hearthstones, long grown cold, that the wild grief overwhelmed him, and he struck himself on the breast with clenched fists, and it's what he said:

"Oh, isn't it the sorrowful day, Finn of the open hand, for your own son to be this way a stranger above your empty hearthstone! And you, Goll, and Caolite, and Diarmuid of the fair women, and my own son Oscar, is there never one of you will rise up to bid me welcome? Oh, where shall I turn my face, and who will cover me in my wide grave!"

And as he sat there mourning, his head drooped so low that the long yellow hair of him streamed upon the white mane of the horse, two red foxes came out of a hole and began fighting, one with the other, before him. So when Oisin saw that— the great sign of loneliness and desolation in the house of his father— the weakness of sorrow melted his bones and he sank from the top of the horse, and it's how he lay with his lips to the ground, his arms stretched wide, and he was the same as the dead.

Now, it chanced at that hour that Patrick of the Bells, son of Calphrun, with two of his clerics, was on his way to Ath Cliath to preach the new faith to the people. And some one told Patrick of the strange, beautiful man who looked like a god of the Tuatha de Danaan, and who had just gone riding on a wonderful horse up the hill of Almhuin, and who was now lying as one dead upon the ground.

But when Patrick went to that place, he saw no wonderful horse, and there was in it no god of the Tuatha de Danaan, but only a tall old man, and he lying moaning and mourning among the stones. For, as Niahm had foretold, the instant Oisin's foot touched the ground, the horse vanished, and the chill of the ages crept into his bones and into his heart, and he was a withered old man! Even the mind in him was old.

After Oisin told his wonderful story to the clerics, Patrick took him by the hand and led him the ways to Ath Cliath, where for three days Oisin listened to Patrick of the Bells preaching to the princes and to the people. And every night, through

the long hours till between the crowing of the cock and the full light of day, Oisin would be telling Patrick and his clerics in the monastery the story of the Fianna and of the wonderful Country of the Young. And they would never be tired listening to him.

On the fourth day of the preaching, when Patrick was getting ready to baptize the people, it's what he said to Oisin:

"Come out now with the others, son of Finn, till I baptize you and save you from the torments of hell; for if you are not baptized you can never enter heaven."

"But tell me first, Patrick of the white book, where are the Fianna-— -my son, Oscar of the strokes, Art Garriada, the victorious Caolite, son of Ronan, and Finn, my father— are they in your heaven?"

"No," answered Patrick, "their likes would not be let into heaven; they died unbaptized. They are prisoners in deep hell, suffering the torments of fire."

A spot of red anger burned on either cheek of Oisin, and it's what he answered:

"Then keep your heaven for yourself, O Patrick of the crooked-staff, and for the likes of these ill-singing clerics! As for myself, I want none of it. I will go to this hell you speak about to be with Finn, my father, and my son Oscar, and the friends of my youth."

And Patrick was sore sorry to hear this, for he loved greatly the high loyalty and the white honor of the old Fenian; still, he could not keep back a quick surge of wrath, so he said:

"O witless old man, if you had been given but the quick peep of one eye into the place where the Fianna are confined, it is a different sort of wish that you would be speaking, and it's humble and frightened enough you would be at the same time!"

Then Oisin, striving hard to keep back the anger, asked of Patrick:

"But how big is this hell of which you all are so much afraid, O son of Calphrun?"

And Patrick was obliged to answer him: "I do not know how big the place is; but, be content, it is wide enough and deep enough and strong enough to hold forever the sinful Fianna of Ireland."

Then Oisin burst forth: "Well, let me tell you, O stranger in the country, if hell were half the size of Ireland, my Finn and his champions would cut their way with their swords from one end of it to the other. And know, too, if it were heaven they were wanting to go into, it isn't the likes of your God that would be keeping

them out. It's little knowledge you have of Finn, son of Cumhull, to be saying things like that. On the plain of Gabhra, Finn with his own hand slew two hundred fighting-men."

"It isn't hundreds that Finn has against him now, O sinful old man, but thousands and tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands."

"If there were as many against him as there are drops of water in Loch Dearg, O Patrick, who belittles the champions of Ireland, my Finn and his heroes would not leave a head on a neck, from one end of hell to the other."

And Oisin was not baptized that day. And neither on the next, nor for seven days after that day, did Patrick even speak to the rough old warrior of heaven or of repentance or of any pious thing; but every night of the seven the two were together, it's only kindness and the deep flattery of long-reaching questions that the pagan got from Patrick. And the saint noticed with great grief that every day the old chief was fainter of voice and weaker than he was the day before, and the fear grew heavy on Patrick that Oisin would die unbaptized. And if the son of Calphrun grew fond of Oisin, it was fonder of the saint that Oisin himself became; and it's what he said at last:

"O Patrick of the long prayers, it's little liking I have for your clerics and their fasting and their singing and their sour faces; but you, O strange man with the pleasant word, it's great the warmth that's in my heart for you, and it's loath I'd be to part with you when we die. Maybe it's not much enjoyment you'll be having in heaven, I'm thinking, with all these wearisome persons fretting and keening from morning till night around you about their souls. Whisper! Do you, Patrick, give up heaven and come with me to the Fianna, where I promise there is plenty of eating and drinking, and singing, and hunting, and courting, and chessplaying, and warriors contending one with another. I'll speak the good word for you to Finn, my father, and it's a hundred thousand welcomes will lie before you."

But Patrick answered him sadly: "O foolish man of the sword, it's little of those pleasures are allowed to the enemies of heaven."

On another day Oisin said: "It's what I'm thinking sometimes, Patrick of the white cloak, that if Finn and the King of saints are enemies now, it must be the way that some other king is carrying jealous lies between the two of them. Couldn't you send word to your King that Finn was always the true-hearted man with the open hand?"

"Finn and the Fianna are overthrown; they are in the bonds of pain, being punished for their pride, their boasting, and their misdeeds."

Then Oisin burst forth again: "It's easy for you to say that to me now, when the strength has gone from me, O soft-handed priest; but if Minne, the least of the Fianna, were here, it's few psalms your clerics would be singing in this house the night, and it's many's the sore head would be running about Ath Cliath looking for a place to hide itself. And now, don't be talking to me that way any more, O Patrick of the crooked staves, for it's little heed I'll be giving you from this out!"

"O witless old man," cried Patrick, in great distress, "it's a bed of fire you are making for yourself this day, when you should be striving for the delights and pleasures of heaven!"

"Tell me, Patrick of the golden vestments," the son of Finn asked again, "will Meargach of the green spears, who fought against us with his hosts at Cnoc-an-Air, enter heaven?"

And it's what Patrick answered then: "The unbaptized are enemies of my King; they can never enter heaven!"

And it's then that Oisin said: "It wasn't that way at all with my king, for the whole world might come to his door and get meat and shelter there; and they'd find a smith at a forge, too, that would be mending their arms while they stood boasting, maybe, that those same arms would be reddening the ground with our blood on the morning of the morrow. But tell me another thing, O Patrick: would my horse or my hound be allowed with me in that city?"

"Neither your horse nor your hound nor any soulless thing may enter that place."

"Well, then, take my answer, Patrick of the wheedling tongue: If in heaven you can never hear the song of the blackbird nor the linnet on the bough, nor the cry of the hounds on a frosty morning, nor the bellow of the stag as he comes leaping down the mountain, it's not the kind of a place I'd like to be spending the rest of my days in. No, no, Patrick of the Bells, don't be throwing up your hands that way, for, whatever happens to me, where I'd be is with my father and his people."

And after that it's how Patrick marveled that while he and Oisin might be talking pleasantly forever about battles and adventures and wonders, still and all, if the two of them began speaking about religious things, then before one could walk five spear-lengths the saint would be losing his temper and the hot anger would drive all convincing arguments and all good discourse to the four winds. So Patrick made up his mind that 'twas an evil spirit that was coming between the

two of them, and that for the future the old warrior might say what he liked and Patrick would keep his temper.

Often, toward the end of the day, Oisin used to be climbing with his staff up the green slope of Slieve Carman, and it's there he would stay, his chin sunk in his two hands and he gazing sadly out to where the red sun was sinking into the western sea.

On a day, the son of Calphrun followed him to where he was sitting that way on the hillside, and the two of them remained there awhile without talking together, until Patrick spoke up and said:

"I'm a-wondering, O Oisin of the brooding mind, what is the secret worry and long fretting that's on you. By virtue of our friendship, tell me what trouble it is that you are keeping hidden and covered."

At that the old warrior shifted uneasily and turned away his face. "This is the trouble that's on me," he said at last. "Here I am among strangers, without bread and without any pleasant food. Look you, my breast is beginning to slant inward like a nesting curlew's breast, and soon enough, I am thinking, the two legs of me will be sunk to the size of a robin's legs. My grief and my woe! I, that was used to living in such great plenty, to be spending my days now among a houseful of fasting clerics!"

"It isn't true at all, what you are saying," the son of Calphrun replied. "Twoscore round wheaten cakes, with their share of wine and flesh, are what is given you every day except the fast-days. No, no; it isn't starvation at all that is on you, ungrateful old man."

But Oisin wagged his gray head and spoke stubbornly: "It's little liking I have for these same fast-days, O priest of the contending tongue, and it's few other kinds of days are coming into your house, and it for my sorrow filled at the same time with praying and singing. It's well I know that if generous Finn and my brave son Oscar were here to-day we would not be without plenty of meat this night at the command of the bell of the seven tolls."

And it's what Patrick, smiling, answered: "Have done, fond old man! Well I know that it's neither the fasting nor the prayers nor the chanting of the clerics that is on you, but only a long, deep yearning for the unblessed woman of magic in that far country, and for your children. And don't I know, too, why you come here day after day, staring across the white-ridged water?"

When Oisin heard that, he was silent for a while, but his two eyes dimmed with, the tears, and when he answered it's what he said:

"Well I know what a shame it is for a great warrior to be mourning for the sight of a woman, or to be ochoning and sorrowing after little children. But over there beyond that measureless sea, on the white shore of the Country of the Young, Niahm, my beautiful queen without blemish, is every day standing waiting for me, and that is why I sit here from the red of the evening till the black of the night. O Patrick, the heart inside of me is dry and empty as a withered nut with the lonesomeness and the age and the longing."

And Patrick spoke, comforting him: "Surely it is, as you say, a shame for a great warrior like yourself to be mourning and fretting after a woman, and she unblessed— a woman of magic, and not human at all. And you'll quit thinking of her now."

And it's what Oisin said then: "O Patrick, who has traveled the world over, it is yourself has not seen, East or West, nor yet have any of your clerics seen the equal of that woman for beauty or goodness. Her voice was softer than the black birds of Derrycarn when she spoke my name; a gold ring was always hanging from each curl of her shining hair; and the kisses of her lips were sweeter than honey mingled through red wine."

And Patrick said then: "Isn't it a pitiful thing to hear a withered old man with such silly words in his mouth? Isn't it fitter that you should be crying those hot tears for fear of the anger of God? "

And Oisin spoke from behind wet hands: "I will cry my fill of scalding tears, O Patrick of the white staves, though not for God, but for her and for Finn and for my lost people."

But Patrick put down his anger, and he said: "It is a sin for you to be crying that way after the like of any woman, and I will tell you now of how a woman first brought all the sin and trouble into the world."

And with that the saint began telling Oisin the true story of Adam and Eve. But when Patrick got to that part of the story where Adam was telling God that it was all Eve's fault, and that she had tempted him to eat, Oisin impatiently waved the saint to silence and wouldn't be listening any further, and it's what he said:

"Don't be telling me any more about your saints or of their doings! If I had Adam before me now, it's little breath I'd leave in his body to be carrying tales again that way on any poor woman! "

It was hard for Patrick to control himself then, but he put down his wrath and said: "Will you ever leave off with your empty words, O hoary old man? Shameful it is for me to be listening and you always talking in sinful mockery of the great saints."

And Oisin answered: "It isn't mockery. Were my own Oscar and your three greatest saints hand to hand on Cnocna-bh-Fiann, and if I saw my son down, I would say that your saints were strong men. Patrick, ask of God if he remembers when Finn fought with the king of the speckled ships, and if He has seen, East or West or in His own country, a man who was equal to my Finn."

And Patrick strove in vain to answer with a soft tongue, but he cried: "O wicked old man, it's little you know of God, to be speaking such wild words. It was He who made the sun and the moon and the stars; it is He that gives blossoms to the trees and makes the grass and the flowers to grow in the fields."

And Oisin spoke slowly and with scorn then: "It wasn't in making grass and birds and little flowers that my king took delight, but in spreading his banner in front of the fight, and in hacking at bones, and in leading his warriors where the danger was greatest, and in courting and swimming and hunting, and in beholding all in the house drinking. It was in such things as these, O son of Calphrun, that my king took delight. Now, Patrick, by virtue of the white book and the crozier that is lying there at its side, relate to me any great feat of strength or any great deed of fighting that was ever done by your King of saints; I haven't heard that He ever reddened His hands."

At that Patrick rose hastily from the rock, and took his crozier and his white book from the ground, and he was very wroth. Twice he tried to speak, and twice he held his words. Then it's what he said:

"Cease your blasphemies, O withered old man! It is your ignorance and want of knowledge that saves you from the present anger of God. Your time of grace is dwindling into hours; before they have slipped away entirely, submit to Him who does all things well. Stoop your head and strike your breast and shed your tears."

And it's what the warrior answered: "I will strike my breast, indeed, and shed my fill of tears, but not for God or for His saints, but for my Finn and the heroes." And then Oisin was alone on the side of the bleak hill.

But that night Patrick brought his own share of wheaten cakes and gave them to Oisin.

And on another day Patrick was speaking of the day of judgment, when all the dead would rise, when all who fell in battles and all who were drowned in the waves, as well as those who died in their beds, would be coming together in one place for judgment. And the son of Finn asked of Patrick:

"Oh, tell me, priest of the pleasant speech, is it sure that Finn and my son Oscar will be there, and Luanan of the heavy spears, and Cruagan the mighty, and Mualan of the exploits?"

And Patrick answered: "Finn and all his host will stand before the judgment-seat on that day to take sentence for their sins."

And Oisin asked again: "Do you think will Cairbre, the high king, with the hosts of the Clanna Moirne, be let within sight of the Fianna?"

And Patrick answered, as before, that all men that were ever born of woman must stand before the judgment-seat that day. And it's what Oisin said:

"Well, then, I'm thinking, Patrick, that if all Finn's champions come together again that morning with the hosts of King Cairbre, who fought against us at Gabhra, you may tell your God that since the world began He never saw, East or West nor between heaven and the grass, such grand fighting as He will see that day."

And Patrick answered him sharply: "It's little fighting the Fianna will be doing there, and it's little they'll be thinking of battles; but it's mourning and weeping they'll be, and gnashing their teeth as they are being driven away into the burning pit."

And it's what Oisin answered: "O stranger in the country, isn't it the great spite you have against the champions of Ireland, who never did you any harm, to be putting the heavy lies on them that way! But let me tell you that it isn't mourning or weeping at all we will go from that place, but free and unhindered, marching proudly together, one breast even with another breast, our slanted spears shining, our silken banners spread, our bards chanting the noble war-songs, and the soldiers of heaven running frightened and scattered before us."

At that Patrick was in great trouble; and he went out of the house then, and shut himself up in the chapel, and it's there praying he was until evening; and he never stirred while the vespers were being read, and even long after the cloisters were still with the sleep Patrick was kneeling, with bowed head, like a statue of stone. But at the turn of midnight he arose and went to the cell where Oisin was sleeping, and it's what he said:

"Awake, Oisin of the stubborn heart! Arise, for my God has taken pity on your unbelief."

Then Oisin, without a word, rose wondering, and the two went into the darkness and the silence of the night. It's by every short way they went over the hills and through the valleys until, by dusk of the evening of the morrow, they came to the ford of the river that flowed through the wide plain of Gabhra. And when Oisin saw that place a great weakness came on him, and he leaned his full weight on the shoulder of the saint, and it's what he said:

"My grief and my woe, O Patrick of the helping arm! it's well I know this sorrowful spot. It is the battle-field of Gabhra, where the bravest and the comeliest lie buried. I saw that stream before us run crimson red with the best blood of Ireland. Och, ochone, my grief! There at the hill's foot fell my son Oscar of the strokes, and just here sank down together the seven brave sons of Caolite, and there died Lugaidh's son; and never in this world before was there such loss of fighting-men. Why have you brought us to this sad place, O Patrick?"

And it's how the saint answered him: "It's because the dust of the Fianna lies buried all about us here that we came. Tell me, Oisin of the long years, if Finn and the Fianna were at peace with God, would you also be baptized, and so be prepared for the city of saints?"

"It's little use to be striving to hide it from you, Patrick; it's hard it is to be at odds with you, and gladly I'd be friends with God just for your sake. Besides, if there be need of fightingmen in heaven, the King of saints cannot do a wiser thing than to send for Goll and the mighty Oscar of the strokes and the soldiers of the Fianna."

And Oisin could not understand at all the tears in Patrick's eyes nor the tremble in his voice as the saint answered him:

"The mercy of God is more wonderful than all His works; He has answered the prayers of the humblest of his servants. So, Oisin, this night you will be christened with Finn, your father, and with your loved comrades of the Fianna; your high loyalty to them has conquered heaven. Come with me now to the ford."

At that he led the old pagan's faltering steps into the shallow stream and baptized him there. When that was done, he bade Oisin return to the water's edge and wait for him there. But Patrick remained in the water praying, and it's what it seemed, that his figure grew taller and his face glowed with a white light. Three times he raised his arms toward heaven, then bowed his head again and waited.

When he did that, a heavy, luminous mist settled on either bank of the stream. Presently the figure of a giant warrior with shield and sword, and two spears of' ancient make, stood at the river's edge, outlined against the mist; and Patrick knew by the king's crown that was upon the warrior's forehead that it was no other than the great Finn, son of Cumhull himself, that was in it. And the warrior came into the stream and stately bent his knees before Patrick, and Patrick baptized him there. When that was done, the mighty son of Cumhull arose and passed on into the mist on the opposite shore whence he had come. Then followed Oscar of the strokes, and Cairrioll of the white skin, and Faolan the

liberal, and Conan of the sharp tongue, and Caolite of the flaming hair, and his seven sons. And as each passed he bent his knee in the flood, and Patrick sprinkled the water on his forehead and spoke the words that changed him into a child of God. Thus captain followed captain, and host followed host, until the warriors came no more.

When the last figure melted away into the haze Patrick knew that his task was ended. But as he turned to regain the bank, a resplendent figure stepped forth to meet him. Of all the men Patrick had ever seen in the world, this one was the stateliest and comeliest. It's more than seven feet tall he was, and the hair of his proud head fell like burnished gold to his shoulders. Upon his brow was a golden fillet, and a collar of red gold encircled his neck. In spite of the youthful beauty of the man's face, Patrick knew that it was Oisin and no other that stood before him. As the saint gazed, the apparition raised its right hand high above its head, with the open palm toward Patrick. And it's how it stood there smiling a little minute, and then disappeared through the cloud, the way the others had gone.

As it did that the mists lifted, and Patrick went out to where the figure of the old man was lying, and it's how he lay with his lips to the ground, and he cold and dead.

Then Patrick made a wide grave of stones over against the hill's foot where Oscar fell, and he buried Oisin there.

Now, that was the greatest miracle of St. Patrick— bringing the Fianna of Ireland from the grave the way they would be baptized and saved for heaven.

**The End**