JOHN BROUGHAM

THE BUNSBY PAPERS (SECOND SERIES): IRISH ECHOES

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Содержание

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PREFACE

Perhaps the most interesting, if not the most instructive, records of any nation, are its traditions, and legendary tales, and in no part of the world can there be found so varied and whimsical a store, as in Ireland. Every portion of the country; every city, town, and village; nay, almost every family of the "real ould stock" has its representative share in the general fund.

It is a very curious study to trace the analogy between the early mythic stories of all countries, their similarity being strikingly obvious. The great landmarks of actual history are by them vividly defined, and their integrity sustained. As an instance – the universal nature of the mighty deluge which swept the youthful world, finds its record not alone in the annals of that wondrous people, in whose line has descended all we know of learning and religion; but also in the oral traditions and semi-historic accounts of many other nations which have since merged into the stream of chronology.

I mention this particular instance for the purpose of fixing the originality of an early anecdote, very often reproduced and claimed by sundry joke chroniclers, as well as to give the Irish tradition upon the same subject. Here are the words of the veracious historian Leland:

"When Noah was building the ark to preserve himself and his family, one Bith, a man of note and substance – an antideluvian millionaire, no doubt – with his daughter Sesar, applied to the Patriarch for admission, thinking, of course, that all he had to do was to step up to the captain's office, and settle. But Noah denied their request – probably from want of accommodation. On receiving this repulse, Bith collected his family together, and, as the result of their deliberations, they resolved to build a similar vessel for their own private use – a very sensible determination it must be conceded. When the ship was finished, Bith together with his wife, Beatha, his two daughters, Sesar and Barran, with their respective husbands, Ladhra and Fionton, and *fifty* of the most beautiful women – inordinate rascals – that could be induced to venture along with them, took passage therein; but unfortunately, not knowing the exact period when the rain would begin to descend – a diluvian 'Merriam' would have been of great value – they put to sea forty days too soon, and these raw sailors, for want of skill in navigation, were tossed and driven from sea to sea for the space of seven years and a quarter – how they victualled their independent ark the historian deems a matter of no import – at last, however, they landed upon the western coast of Ireland at a place called Dunnamberk, in the barony of Corchadie Ibhne, near about sundown. When they found themselves safely ashore, the three men agreed to divide the fifty women between them. Bith, besides his wife, had seventeen for his share, Fionton had his wife and seventeen more, and Ladhra was satisfied with the sixteen that remained – good easy man."

In justice to our historian it must be admitted that he expresses strong doubts as to the truth of the legend. "It is thought," says he, "to be an unaccountable relation, for, from whence intelligence could be had of what passed in this island before the flood, is out of my power to conceive. We have, indeed, some ancient manuscripts that give a legendary account of four persons who, they say, lived before and after the deluge, and afterwards divided and possessed themselves of the four parts of the world; but our antiquaries that are best acquainted with the history of Ireland, reject such fables with just indignation. As for such of them who say that Fionton was drowned in the flood, and afterwards came to life and lived long enough to publish the antediluvian history of the island – probably with some enterprising patriarchal "Bunce Brothers" – what can they mean, except to corrupt and perplex the original annals of the country?" – What, indeed, Mr. Leland?

But this, you'll say, has nothing to do with *Irish Echoes*. Well, to be candid, I don't think it has. The fact is, my thoughts took an erratic flight in that direction, and this obedient servant between my thumb and fingers had to accompany them, *nolens volens*.

With regard to the pages which follow, I have endeavored to imbue them more with a Hibernian spirit, than with any attempt at orthographic peculiarity, inasmuch as I consider it but a factitious species of wit which hinges upon an amount of bad spelling. I have, therefore, abstained in a great measure from perverting the language, only doing so where it is absolutely necessary to give individual character.

Some of the sketches are now for the first time presented; others have before appeared, but such as they are, here they are; all I can say in their favor is, that they were drawn from no source but my own invention; could I have done better, be assured I would; and yet, although they are not as perfect as I might wish them to be, still, I am not without hope, that some amusement, and also – or my arrows have indeed been shot awry – some incentives to a deeper reflection than accompanies the mere story-telling, may be found scattered here and there amongst them.

DAN DUFF'S WISH, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

CHAPTER I

The burthen wearies him who bears it;
And the shoe pinches him who wears it.

A very snug, comfort-suggesting apartment is the parlor of Squire Bulworthy, the rich grazier, upon which you and I, friend reader, are about so unceremoniously to intrude ourselves.

If you will but look around you, you will see that all the appliances of home delectation, procurable in so insignificant a town as Ballinasquash, are here gathered together; that looking-glass is the pride of the domestic circle and the envy of the neighborhood; those easy-chairs look as though tired humanity might find instant relief from their ample plumpness; the side-board, with its brilliant array of flashing decanters and hospitable-looking glasses, not mean, tailor-souled, thimble-measure aggravators, but huge whisky-punch goblets and wines of capacious magnitude; then the carpet, kidderminster to a certainty, dazzling in the variety of its crimson and blue, and yellow, displaying apochryphal flowers and inexplicable flourishes, such as put to the blush the most profound efforts of unartistic nature.

You must agree with me, taken altogether, that there is an air of supreme content and well-to-do-ableness about the entire surroundings, rendered absolutely certain by the smirking countenance of the Squire himself, as it smiles complacently upon you from that prodigiously-ornamented frame – that jolly red nose is unmistakably indicative of good living – those twinkling eyes display the very fire of self-satisfaction; the town counsellor evidences itself in the-going-to-address-the-meeting attitude, and the man of means flashes from every link of that ponderous watch-chain and coquets amongst those massive seals.

Bulworthy is evidently well off.

"Hallo, what noise is that proceeding from yonder room?"

"Get out, you scoundrel."

It is a fat, gurgling, wheezy kind of voice, Bulworthy's, and speaking sets him coughing an uncomfortable, apoplectic sort of cough, like the sough of wind escaping from a cracked bellows.

"Get out, you vagabone; ugh! ouf!"

A singular-looking man-servant makes a sudden exit from the room, very evidently hurt, physically, just as an equally singular female domestic enters at the door, having a substantial matutinal repast upon a large-sized tray.

"Keep us from harum," said she, in a delicious Tipperary brogue, soft as honey; "and what's that?"

"Troth, an it's me, Moll, I b'leeve," replied the ejected, lustily rubbing the part affected.

"What's happened, Barney?"

"Oh! it's ould Bulworthy, bad cess to him," said Barney, in an undertone, wincing and twisting from pain; "he's what he calls astonishin' me."

"What for?" inquired Mary, forgetting that she was running considerable risk, from the circumstance of delaying the Squire's breakfast.

"The devil a one ov me knows; whiniver he's crass, he thinks that hittin' me a lick will bring him straight; bedad, if such showers of good luck as he's had all his life drownds a good timper as his is drownded, I hope I may niver be worth a *scurrig* as long as I breathe."

"Indeed, an' I have the same sort of comfort wid the mistress," said Mary. "Haven't I had the heart's blood of an illigant scowldin' jest now, for sugarin' her ladyship's tay wid brown?"

"Why, murther alive, Mollshee, you don't tell me that it's the *lump* she uses?"

"Not a word of a lie in it, nigh hand an ounce of tay in the taypot, too," replied Mary, with a what-do-you-think-of-that expression.

"Faix, I mind the time," said Barney, "when she thought the smell of that same wonst a week was a nosegay.

"Thrue for you, indade, an' not long ago, aither."

Here a sudden thought occurred to the gossipping Hebe.

"Murther alive!" said she, with a start that made the cups rattle; "if I ain't forgettin' ould Bluebeard's breakfast; there'll be wigs on the green, if the could's come at the eggs, for he's mighty perticular entirely."

So saying, she knocked a timid knock at the door of the dreaded Squire's room; a fierce "Come in," followed by the inevitable cough, hurried her into the apartment, from whence she emerged again very shortly, and, with stealthy step and a look more eloquent than words, indicated the state of Bulworthy's temperament.

Just then, there was a quiet little ring at the hall bell. "Run, you divil, run," says Barney. "It kills him intirely to hear that bell goin'; who is it? if you let 'em ring twice, he'll massacree me; oh! it's you, is it?" he continued, as a neat, clean, tidy woman entered the room, holding in her hand a capacious pair of top boots.

It was Mrs. Peggy Duff, the comfortable little wife of Dan Duff, the cobbler. "Save all here," said she, as she came in.

"Amen to that same, includin' yer own purty self, Mrs. Duff," replied Barney, with a touch of comic gallantry.

"Sure, an it's the hoighth of polite you are, Mr. Palthogue," replied Peggy.

"I wish you wouldn't hurt your purty little mouth by thryin' to squeeze such a big name out of it," said Barney, giving her a knowing squint. "Sure, Barney used to be enough to fill it wonst."

"Ah! but the times is althered now, Mr. Barney," she rejoined; "ould Pether Bulworthy – the saints be good to us, I mean the Squire's mounted sky-high, like a kite, an ov coorse you've gone up with him like the tail."

"But it ain't my nater to forget ould friends for all that, Peg *machree*."

"Sure, an I'm glad to hear that, anyway, for it's mighty few heads that doesn't get dizzy whin they're hoisted up upon a hill of fortune, especially on a suddent like."

Their further conversation was unceremoniously cut short by a roar from Bulworthy's room; now, the Squire's style of using the English language was highly original and somewhat peculiar; with him, the greater the number of syllables, and the more imposing the sound of the sentences, the better were they qualified to make a proper impression upon the *ignobile vulgus*, amongst whom it was his ambition to pass for a "Sir Oracle;" but let him speak for himself. You must imagine each word to be accompanied by that ear-wounding, wheezing cough.

"What horribly atrocious and propinquitous oration is that goin' on out there, eh!"

Barney trembled to the heels of his brogues. "Talk to him, Peg," said he, in an agitated whisper, "while I make meself scarce; don't be afeared," he added, as he stole quietly off. "A woman's voice softens him down like a sun-ray on a snowball."

"Hallo there," shouted the Squire. "Am I obligated to keep continuitously requestin' an elucidation of that rumbunctiousness outside; who's there?"

"If ye plaze sir, it's only me," replied Peggy, "wid ye honor's honorable 'tops' that wanted heel-piecin'."

"Oh! Ah!" wheezed Bulworthy. "Wait, my good woman; I'll finish dressin' with all convaynient circumlocution, and come to you."

"Good woman, indeed," thought Peggy, with a toss of her head and a chirp. "Sure an' there's oil on his tongue sense he's turned Squire," and then, with something akin to envy, she began to scan the various articles of home-ornament scattered about the, to her, magnificent parlor, soliloquizing at the same time. "Look at the chairs, stuffed seats, as I'm a sinner, wid hair, too, I'll be bound. Mahogany tables, if you plaze, all covered over wid useless curiosities an' books that nobody sees the inside ov; did anybody ever see the likes; what's this?" as her eye caught sight of a handsome cologne-bottle. "Madame must have her scints an her sweet wathers, to wash away the smell of the shop, may-be; I remimber the time when they kep' a little bit of a huxtherin' place, and all the parfume they could musther proceeded from the soap and candles, and, may-be, a red herrin' or two to give the rest a flavior."

At this moment the Squire lumbered into the room in all the majesty of a brilliant calico dressing-gown; seating himself grandly in a large arm-chair, and patronizingly waving his hand towards Peggy, in a bland and condescending tone of voice, he moderated his impatience down to the true keep-your-distance point.

"Well, ma'm," said he, "so you've brought the tops at last, after me waitin' for them a tremenjus course of time; tell that waxy conglomeration of cobblin' connubiality, Mr. Duff, your husband, that, in consequence of his haynious neglect, I have been obligated to annihilate my usual run wid the Ballinasquash hounds. What's the remuneration?"

"If you mane the pay, sir," replied Peg, with a reverence, "it's on'y a shillin'."

"I have no small pecuniation in the way of silver," said Bulworthy, plunging his great fist into his enormous pocket, and rattling several gold pieces about in a most tantalizing manner, a general practice with purse-proud ignorance, adding, with characteristic meanness, "can you change me a sovreign?"

Poor Peggy's face flushed up to the roots of her hair; he knew she couldn't, and she knew he knew so.

"Indeed, sir," said she, "It wouldn't be convaynent just now;" and it was with difficulty she restrained herself from hinting that it was only recently that he himself had the power to put the insolent question.

"Well, then, ma'm," said he, pompously; "all I can say is, that you must pedestrianize in this vicinity on some anterior opportunity; for the present, you can perambulate – to make myself understandable to your limited capacities – walk!"

"Yes sir, thank you, sir," replied Peggy, humbly courtesying to the domestic sultan, and only wondering how he *could* keep any teeth in his head, using such hard words.

"Good mornin' to you, Squire," she said, as she retired, "Here's wishin' you safe through the dictionary."

"What does the oleaginous faymale mane; oh! these abominaceous phlebians laugh at me, in spite of all I can do to impress them with the importance of my station; with all the pride of my brick building, I can't altogether root out the recollection of the little grocery; and, indeed, if it comes to that," he continued, with a real sigh, "I used to be a great deal happier when I was scrapin' up money, by weighin' out hay-porths of sustainance to the surroundin' population than I am now, and the advantitious title of Squire tacked on to my cognomination."

His nerves gave a sudden thrill as a shrewish voice from an adjacent room, squealed out, "Are you there, Pether?"

"Yes, my love," he replied, quickly, while, in an undertone, he murmured to himself, "ah! there's a melancholy laceration to my gentility, my *cary spowsy*, I can't instill aristocratical idayas into her deleterious temperature, anyway."

Now, Mrs. Peter Bulworthy deserves a distinctive paragraph, and she shall have it.

Although morally she was Peter's much better half, yet bodily she could aspire to no such appellation. In regard of personal weight, they bore about the same relative affinity as a fine, fat,

substantial round of beef would to the carving-fork beside it. The physical difference, however, she amply made up for, by keeping her prongs ever actively employed pricking the unfortunate Peter at every assailable point. Peter was pinguid, plump, and plethoric – she was thin to attenuation. Peter's voice, though husky, was rich and oily – hers was like the attrition of ungreased cart-wheels. Peter affected dignity and social status – she gloried in her unmitigated vulgarity; he, poor man, had long ago given up every idea of resisting her domestic tyranny. "Anything for a quiet life," was his motto, and, with something akin to proper retribution, the indignities and annoyances, which he, in the plenitude of his pocket-power, inflicted upon his poorer neighbors, was repaid tenfold on his devoted head, when he came within the circle of Mrs. Bulworthy's operations.

"I wonder how her temper is this morning," thought Peter, as he cast a furtive glance towards her eyes as she sailed into the room, dressed in – I wish I could describe that walking-dress; all I can say, is, that it looked as if she had laid a wager that she could display in her attire every color in existence, and, won it.

"Well, Pether dear, and how is my ould man to-day?" said she. The Squire released an imprisoned sigh, in gratitude for this manifestation of so unusual a mildness of temper; emboldened thereby to remonstrance, he also ventured to remark:

"I wish, my love, you wouldn't address me by the antiquitous appellation of 'ould man.' It was all very well when we kept a bit of a shop" —

"Oh, now, Pether, you're comin' over me wid your larning," she replied, with a dash of vinegar. "You know that I never cared a *thranieen* for the likes, nor never wants to make myself out anything but what I am. Not all as one, as some folks I know, that's never happy except they're spittin' out mouthfuls of words big an' hard enough to crack filberts wid. You see I can talliate if I like, Mr. Pether."

"Re-taliate, obscurest of feminines."

"Well, it's all the same, bless my soul, if one only understands what's meant, what does it si'nafy what's said?"

"'Si'nafy,' madame," replied Bulworthy, settling himself into a magisterial position, "do you think that us octo-grammarians take no pride in the purity of our entomology, skintax, and progeny. Go an' busy yourself about the futilities of domestic exuberance and leave polite literature to the intellectual sect."

"Meanin' you, I suppose, you concated *omathaun*," said the lady, with a shrug of her pointed shoulders, adding, in a more decided tone, whose effect was instantaneously visible on the countenance, and in the courage of her spouse, "Come, we've had enough of this; put on your boots, an' take me out for a walk."

Just snugly ensconced in his favorite arm-chair, his slippered feet on the cozy fender, and the county paper on his knee as yet unfolded, Peter would have given a great deal to be left in his undisturbed quiet, but one glance at those determined eyes convinced him of the futility of resistance. With a profound groan, he laid down the coveted newspaper, took up his boots, and, without attempting a remonstrance, walked into his bed-room, saying:

"Certainly, dear. I shall prepare my perambulating habiliments directly."

"Pooh, I wish these long words would stick in your throat and choke you some day," screamed his amiable helpmate; but, when he was out of earshot, her face relaxed into a more gentle expression. "Poor Pether," said she, "he wants to stick himself up for a gentleman; now that we've got away from the grocer's shop, he can't bear to hear the sound of the place mentioned, which, as in duty bound I do, twenty times a day; if I didn't keep him in wholesome subjection, he'd get the upper hand of me, as he does with all the rest. Now Pether," she cried, elevating her shrillness into a whistle, "am I goin' to be kept danglin' here all the blessed mornin'?"

"I'm coming, I'm coming, impatient individuality," said Peter, from his room, where, to do him credit, he was hurrying through the unwelcome process with considerable alacrity; "arrah, how do you

suppose a gentleman can beatify his external appearance in such a momentous space of time? but, here I am, at your service, ma'am," he continued, as, in all the dignity of snowy shirt-frill, bright blue body-coat, and big brass buttons, white cord breeches, and shiny top-boots, his great bunch of watch-seals bobbing about like the pendulum of a clock, a black thorn stick under his arm, and a wonderfully-furry white hat covering his moon-looking face, he fancied himself the very impersonation of moneyed importance.

"And maybe you'll tell me, ma'am," said he, as he pulled on a pair of big buckskin gloves, "what you want to be gallivantin' about the streets for at this transitory moment?"

"I choose it," replied the obedient wife. "It's for the benefit of my health, so howld your gab."

"Ah! what unnatural vulgarity."

"If you don't let me be, I'll talk about the shop in the street, loud, so that everybody can hear me."

"I wish to my gracious I had never left it," said he, with a sigh so heavy that it must have carried truth with it.

"Give me your arm, do, and make haste," cried Mrs. Pether, giving a precautionary shake to her numerous, but insufficient flounces. "I'm dyin' to dazzle ould Mrs. Magillicuddy with this bran new shawl."

"Yes," replied Pether, with a glance of resigned conviction, "that's what I thought the benefit to your health would amount to."

So the Squire and his lady – no, I mean Mrs. Peter Bulworthy and her husband – sallied forth, to astonish a few of their neighbors, and amuse a great many more; both Barney, the anomalous man-servant, and Mary, the "maid," pulling up their respective corners of the window-blind to see them, and watch the effect they produced.

"There they go," grunted Barney, with a contemptuous toss of his already scornfully-elevated nose, "the laughin'-stocks of the whole town; dressin' me up this way," – and he gave his nether extremities a glance of derision – "like an overgrown parrot – me, that niver had anything on me back, but an ould canvas apron, an' a dirty face, now I can't stir out o' the house, that I'm not fairly ashamed o' meself; there isn't a gossoon in the barony that doesn't know me as well as av I was the town pump, an' I can't show meself in the place, that they don't hunt me about as av I was a wild nagur. Look at them stockin's, Mary, *acush*, there's flimsy, skimpin things, for a cowld Christian to wear on his *gams*; I'll be ketchin' me death wid them, I know I will. Mary, I'll be on me oath av I don't think them legs'll carry me off yit."

CHAPTER II

A true home-angel, in this world of strife,
Is, man's best friend, a faithful, loving wife.

Now turn we, courteous reader, to the contemplation of a totally different scene.

Not far from the imposing, bright, red brick edifice of Squire Bulworthy – indeed, you can see it on the other side of the street, with its flaring green door and great brazen knocker, its crimson parlor curtains and every-color-in-the-world window-shades – stands the miserable looking tenement inhabited by our cobbling friend, Dan Duff. The walls are fashioned out of that natural, but by no means elegant, or expensive compound, known generally as "mud." The roof is thatched with straw, but so old and weather-worn that the rain soaks through it as though it were sponge; while the accidental vegetable productions which attach themselves to such decaying matter, vainly struggled to give it a semblance of life and verdure. A dilapidated half door, and a poor apology for a window, many of the small panes patched with articles of used up domestic material, were the only means of ingress, ventilation, and light. Notwithstanding the hopeless-looking poverty of the whole, there were one or two indications which, to an observing mind, would tend to lessen, in a remote degree, its general wretchedness. In the first place, a few small, cracked flower-pots decked the little window-sill, from whence crept upward "morning-glories," and bright "scarlet-runners," the delight of industrious poverty. Then there was that invariable sharer of the poor man's crust and companionship, a useless, and not by any means ornamental, cur, shrewd, snappish, and curiously faithful, in friendly contiguity to a well-conditioned cat. You may take your oath that there's harmony beneath the roof where a cat and dog are amicably domiciliated.

With the above exception, the cabin's sole occupant, at the present moment, is a woman; but such a woman – it's the cobbler's wife, before-mentioned; here, however, she is in her peculiar sphere. "Home is home, be it ever so homely," is a trite and true aphorism, and poor Peggy, it is evident, does her best to make this unpromising one as full of comfort as she can. Everything is scrupulously clean and in its place. The little wooden dresser is as white as soap and sand can make it. So is the floor, and so are the scanty household goods.

There is, though, a shade of discomfort on Peggy's pretty face just now, as she laboriously plies her knitting needles, and the small thundercloud breaks out into little flashes of impatience, as she soliloquizes:

"Did anybody ever see the likes of that Dan of mine? He couldn't take the "tops" over to ould Bulworthy himself – not he! – of course not – he wasn't well enough to go out *then*, but the minute my back was turned, away he cuts to the '*shebeen*' house to get his 'mornin" – ugh! I do believe if he was before me now, I'd – but no – my poor Dan, it ain't much comfort he's got in the world; so I won't say a blessed word to worry him."

As if to recompense the considerate thought, Dan's jolly voice was heard, singing one of his consoling ditties.

"Here he comes, bless him," cried Peg, joyfully, "as lively as a lark."

There was wonderful commotion amongst the animals as Dan entered. "Pincher," the apocryphal, shook his apology for a tail as vigorously as that diminished appendage was capable of accomplishing; while "Pussy" urged her claims upon his attention by rubbing herself against his legs. Peg said nothing.

Now, Dan perfectly well knew his delinquency. Indeed, the song he had just executed, in a good, bold voice, had more of "brag" in it than real enthusiasm. He saw how the land lay instantly.

"Peg, *alanna machree*, here I am," said he. "Whisht! I know what you're goin' to say. Keep yer mouth shut, you hateful blaggard, or I'll stop it up wid kisses, as close as cobbler's wax. There, Peg," he continued, after having suited the action to the word, with a smack like a carter's whip, "I couldn't help it – I couldn't, upon my word. You were a long time away – and the breakfast was mighty small – and – and – a sort of oneasiness kem over me inside, I was lonesome, and thinkin' of things as wasn't wholesome, so I thought I'd just stick another chalk up at Phil Mooney's, so don't say another word."

"Not a word Dan," replied Peg. "Sure, don't I mind poor Mary Maguire's case, how she never let Mike rest when he had 'the drop' in him, until at long last he stayed out, for the fear of comin' home; the whisky is too strong for a woman to fight agin, Dan, so, if you like it better than me" —

That was a skillful side-blow, and it made its mark.

"Peg, you know better, you thief of the world, you do; you know, in your pure little heart, that's too good for me, or the likes of me; that the summer flowers doesn't love the sunshine of heaven better than I love you; oh! no, it isn't that, not that, Peg *aroon*."

"What is it, then?"

"Well, Peg," he continued, "its the *thinks* that comes over a poor fella when he hasn't a *scurrig* to bless himself wid; the *thinks* that lays a howld of him when there's nobody by but himself and the devil that sends them, thems the times that worries a *poor* man, Peg."

"Ah! Dan," replied the other, seriously, "but those times worry a *wicked* man worse."

"Well, may-be they do," said the cobbler, doggedly, "if a body knew the truth, but it's bad enough either way. Did the Squire pay for the 'tops?'"

"Not yet, Dan, he hadn't the change!"

"Hadn't he, really," replied the other, bitterly. "Poor fella, what a pity; there's a mighty great likeness betune us in that, anyway. The upstart pup, why the divil didn't he get change. There's the differ, Peg, darlin', betune the rale gintleman and the 'musharoon;' a gintleman as feels and knows he's one, and consequentially acts accordin', will always think of the *great* inconvanience the want of the little bit o' money is to the poor man, and not the small ditto to himself, in the respect of gettin' the change; bad luck attend you, ould Bulworthy, the want of that shillin' has made me break my word in a quarther where I'm mighty loath for to do that same."

"Where is that, Dan?"

"I'll tell you, Peg; on the strength of that shillin' I towld my inside that I'd give it a threat, may I never sin, acush, if I didn't promise it a 'sassidge;' now, you know if you tell your hungryness to come at a certain time, it's generally apt to be purty smart at keepin' the appintmint, and, bedad, mine is waitin' for that sassidge; moreover, it ain't threatin' a man's intayrior relations anyway raysonable to go back of yer word. Murdher, there's a twinge – if it isn't hittin' me a punch in the stomach just to put me in mind, I'm a grasshopper. It's no use," he continued, addressing his unsatisfied digestibles, "you may's well give over grumblin' and touchin' me up that way; it's no fault of mine, it's ould Bulworthy's, bad cess to him; he hadn't any change, the dirty *spalpeen*, you won't take an excuse won't you? then I'll have to fire a pipe at you. Peg, jewil, fill us a *dhudeen*, won't you; this thievin' hunger won't stir a toe unless I hunt it out wid tibaccy."

Peggy soon filled the inevitable pipe, and Dan brought his artillery to bear upon the foe, after a severe round of tremendous puffs, during which the combatants were enveloped in the hot smoke of battle; the enemy showed evident signs of beating a temporary retreat. Dan threw himself back in his chair, and prepared, leisurely, to enjoy the fruits of his victory.

"I wondher," said he, after a few moments of great satisfaction, "I wondher how ould Bulworthy would like to lunch upon smoke? Be jabers, if I had my will, I'd make him eat three males a day of it, until his hard-hearted bowels got tenderer towards the poor."

"Talk of the what's-his-name," said Peggy. "Here he comes, both him and his fine madame, as proud as ten paycocks; look at the airs of them; I wonder they don't have the street widened when they condescend to walk out."

"Peggy, darlin'," said Dan, "divil take me if I havn't a great mind to let out at him for my shillin'."

"Sure you wouldn't; what, in the open street? he'd hang you, Dan, without judge or jury."

"It ain't quite so easy to hang a man as it used to be in the fine ould times, Peg *alanna*," said Dan. "It's my shillin', he has no right to keep it jinglin' in his pocket, and he shan't, neither, if I can help it," he continued, going towards the door. "Hit or miss, here goes: Hollo, Squire!" adding, *sotto voce*, "you murdherin' Turk in top boots; long life to you – you concated ould vagabone."

These expressions, of which the most polite alone reached his ear, as it may be imagined, grated harshly upon the aristocratic nerves of the prodigious Bulworthy; "What's that fellow making such a magniloquent hulla-balloo about," said he, grandly.

"Athin, may-be you'd do my drawin'-room the honor of a sit down, yourself, and her ladyship," said Dan, to the dismay of poor Peggy, who exclaimed: "Don't, Dan, don't; I'm ashamed of you, indeed, I am;" adding, apologetically, "oh, he never would a done it, only for the drink; we're ruined entirely."

"Bad 'cess to me if they're not coming, sure enough," said Dan, somewhat tremulously, but determined to put a good bold face on it, he continued, as they entered, "come, Peg, dust the chair for the lady."

Peg's face was crimson as she complied, she scarcely knew how; Bulworthy's countenance indicated the state of temper with which he accepted the proffered hospitality, while the Squiress gazed coolly and patronizingly around.

"I'm in a tremendious rage," said he, as he shook his fist at Dan. "How dare you have the premeditated insurance to arrogate us into your pig-sty, you ragamuffin."

"Don't worrit, my dear," interposed Mrs. Bulworthy, in an authoritative tone. "It's our dooty, now, as ladies and gentlemen, to inquire into the condition of the poor, and give them wholesome advice. Here, my dear," she continued, taking sundry tracts from her capacious pocket, "read these comfortable pages, and see what a state of awful responsibility you are in."

"Bedad, that's all the poor people is likely to get from such visitors as you," said Dan.

"And now, sir," said Bulworthy, with an imposing frown, "what interrogational imperence do you want to address to me, that you have the owdaciousness to drag me here?"

Dan simply took down a broken piece of slate, and holding it up before the Squire's eyes, "a thriflin' account, sir," said he; "for heel-piecin' your honor's honorable tops, and maybe they don't show off an iligant lump of a leg, this fine spring mornin'," vainly hoping that the unmitigated flattery would mitigate the wrath of the potent Squire.

"And was it for this, you – you illiterate colossus of brass, that you detained me in my preambulations."

"Indeed, sir," timidly interposed Peggy, "I hope that you'll forgive him. It isn't his fault entirely, your honor. It's all on account of a gintleman that he axed for to take a bit of dinner wid him."

"What!" screamed Mrs. Bulworthy, with her sanctimonious eyes elevated to the true Pharisaic standard; "I never heard of such wretched depravity. Dinner! do such wretched creatures deal in so miserable an extravagance? I tremble for your lost condition. Read this;" and she fumbled in her pocket for another comforting document, which Peggy courtesied humbly as she received; "read this, and learn to conquer your unworthy appetites for earthly things." The Squiress was a fine example of those theoretic Lady Bountifuls, whose province it is to feed poverty with such like unsatisfactory viands.

"I'll make you wait for your shillin', you scoundrel," said the irate Squire.

"And serve him right, too," echoed his worthy spouse.

"Then we'll have to wait for our dinner," suggested Dan.

"And what's that to us, you reprobate?"

"Oh, nothin'," said Dan. "Full stomachs thinks there's no empty ones in the world; but may bad fortune stuff them top-boots chock full of corns, for your hard-heartedness, and may you never pull them on without gettin' a fresh stock."

"Dear me, dear me," said the squeaking tract-distributer, "read this, and see what comes of such irreligious observations."

"Read it yourself, ma'am," replied Dan, tossing back the proffered antidote, "maybe you may want it as bad as any of us."

"You have been iniquitously indulging in intoxicating beverages, sir," said Bulworthy.

"A drunkard!" exclaimed his helpmate. "I have a blessed tract or two peculiarly adapted to that abominable crime."

"Oh! no, no, not a drunkard," cried Peggy, snatching the tract from the hand of her visitor; "not a drunkard. The cares of poverty force him to try and forget them, and himself now and then, but that's all."

"All! that all! Oh, for the sinfulness that surrounds us," replied the other.

"Have you been drinking, sir?" demanded the Squire, in a justice-of-peace tone.

"What right have you to ax?" said Dan, boldly. "You owe me a shillin'; that's all I want."

"He has a right, depraved creature that you are," interposed the meek and Christian-like disseminator; "rich people always have a right to ask such questions of their poorer neighbors; but you don't deserve the care we take of your unhappy souls."

"Well, then, since it comes to that," said Dan, "I *do* taste a thrifle whin I can convayniently lay a hould of it; and, more betoken, it's a mighty bad rule that doesn't work both ways. I saw a lot of barrels and bottles goin' into the fine house over the way. I wonder if they wor intended for chimbly ornaments?"

"Come, my dear," said Bulworthy, now supremely indignant, "let us leave these degeneratious individuals to their incoherent reflections."

"I want my shillin'," shouted Dan.

"You shan't have it."

"But I'm hungry, and so is Peggy, and Pincher, and Pussy."

"Read this, you poor, infatuated sinner," said Mrs. B., handing him another elegant extract, "and it will teach you to be contented under all circumstances."

"Will it turn into a piece of bacon?" inquired Dan; "for if it won't yez may curl yur hair wid it. It's all very well for you barn-fed gentry to be crammin' the poor wid bits of paper – gim me me shillin'."

The Squire said not a word, but buttoned his pockets up tightly, while, with an expression of the most intense pity for such unparalleled ignorance, his better half followed him out of the cabin.

"May bitther bad luck attend yez both," said Dan, as they quitted the place. "The dirty dhrop's in yez, and it *will* show itself in spite of all yer money; hollo! ain't that the babby?" he continued, as the tiny voice of a child was heard proceeding from a little bit of a room, their only other apartment.

"Yes, bless his bright eyes," replied Peggy, oblivious now to all the world beside. "He's awake; look at his darlin' little face, wid the laugh comin' all over it like a mealy potato." So saying, she rushed into the room, and commenced hugging and kissing their sole treasure in a most alarming manner.

"Kiss him for me, Peg," cried Dan. "Smother the villain of the world; ah, ha!" he went on, "there's a blessin' ould top-boots hasn't got any way; a fine lump of a fella, wid the health fairly burstin' out of his murdherin' cheeks; as fat as butther, and as lively as a tickled kitten. The Squire's is a poor, wizen-faced *leprechaun* of a creather, that looks as if he was born forty years ould, and grew backwards ever sence. Ha, ha! the thoughts of that bright-eyed schamer puts the song into my heart, like the risin' sun to the lark."

But soon his thoughts took a more desponding turn. "Poor little gossoon," said he, "when I think that there's nothin' before him but his father's luck in the world, to work, and pine, and toil, until

his back is bent before the ould age touches it; it drives away the joy as quick as it came; murdher alive, ain't it too bad to think that ill-lookin' *Kippogue* over the way, might ate goold if he could only disgist it, and when he grows up, my fine, noble, blessed boy will have to bow, and cringe, and touch his hat to a chap wid no more sowl than a worn-out shoe; that's what puts evil thoughts in my head; the boy that I love, aye! almost as hard as if I was the mother of it instead of bein' only its father; when I think of him and what may be before him, oh! how I wish that I stood in ould Bulworthy's shoes, or his 'tops,' if it was only for his sake. Murdher! how sleepy I am all of a suddent; is it the drink, or the imptyness? a little of both, may-be; it ain't often I have a chance of forgettin' the dirty world for a thrifle o' time, so here goes to have a snooze."

So saying, Dan settled himself to take a mid-day nap, for the lack of better employment; but he had scarcely dropped his head on his breast for that purpose when he became aware of a singular ringing sensation in his ears, which increased until he fancied he heard a sound, loud and sonorous as the tolling of the church-clock; at last there came one bang, so startling that he jumped up suddenly from his chair: "The Saints between us and all harum: who's that?" he cried, in a terrible fright; but he could see nothing; the sounds were also gone; a dead silence was around him, and he must have slept for some time, it appeared, for the shadows of evening were darkening the small window. Moodily he leant his head upon his hands and gazed into the small fire-place; a few sods of turf were burning on the hearth; as he looked fixedly upon the waning embers, he perceived that from either end of one of the sods, a thin, white smoke lazily curled up the chimney, gradually increasing in volume and density; while he was vainly wondering how so small a piece of turf could send out so great an amount of vapor, to his still greater surprise, he saw the spiral columns advance towards him, and gather upon each side – slowly they gathered – and mounted in eddying clouds, until they reached to a level with his head; there they ceased, as though imprisoned in an invisible medium, and commenced wreathing and interwreathing, up and down, in beautiful vapory combinations; silently he contemplated the extraordinary phenomenon, in a state of extreme bewilderment, but yet without the slightest sensation of the dread which should accompany so singular a spectacle, and it was with more admiration than awe he became aware that the smoky pillars beside him were gradually moulding themselves into the most exquisite human forms; at length they stood before him defined and perfect – two female appearances of transcendent loveliness; one fair as a sun-beam, the other dark, but each supreme in its individual type of beauty. Gentleness and heavenly love beamed in the mild, blue eyes of the one, glittering boldness flashed from the coal-black orbs of the other: a shower of delicate golden hair, soft and yielding as silken fibres, shed a bright radiance like a halo around the saintly lineaments of the fairer spirit, while massy clusters of raven hue, through which a warm, purple tint was interwoven, glancing, in the light, like threads of fire, enriched the ample brow, and swept down the full form of the darker one. "I wonder if it's alive they are," thought Dan, as he gazed alternately at each. "I'll be upon me oath I dunno which is the purtiest of the two; the yalla-headed one looks as if she could coax the very heart out through me ribs; but, oh! murdher alive! the lightnin' that darts from them black eyes is enough to strike a fella foolish at onst; bad luck to me if I don't spake to them;" so saying, our friend made one of his best bows, tugging the conventional lock left for that purpose. "Your sarvant, ladies," said he, "and what might it be that brings yez out so airly this cowld mornin'."

The fairer apparition, in a voice like spoken melody, answered: "I am the spirit of your better thoughts."

"You don't tell me that, Miss, then it's glad that I am to see you to the fore, and mighty sorry that I haven't got a sate dacent enough to offer to the likes of such an iligant creather," said Dan, "and who's your frind, may I ax?" he went on, turning to the darker beauty.

"I am the spirit of your evil thoughts," replied the other, in a rich, full tone, bending her lustrous eyes upon the questioner in a way that made his heart bound.

"Oh! you are, are you," he gasped out; "faix, and I don't know, if it's welcome you ought to be, or not; but, for the sake of good manners, I'd ax you to sit too, av I had the convaynience."

"You called upon us both, just now," said the good spirit.

"And we are here," continued the other; "so choose between us, which you will entertain."

"Couldn't I be on the safe side, and entertain the both of yez?" suggested Dan, with a propitiatory wink to each.

"That is impossible," replied the good spirit. "We only meet when there's contention in a mortal mind whether he shall the right or wrong pursue. Did you not wish but now that you could change conditions with the rich man opposite?"

"Well, then, I may's well let the whole truth out, seein' that you're likely to know all about it; I *did* wish somethin' of the sort."

"And a very reasonable wish it was," said the dark spirit, on his left.

"A very foolish wish," firmly observed the fair one.

"I don't agree with you," replied the other.

"You never do," said the good spirit.

"Nor ever will!"

"I don't lose much by that" —

"Ladies, darlin'," interposed Dan, "I'd raythe you wouldn't disthress yerselves on my account."

"Don't be alarmed, my good friend," said the fair spirit. "We never can agree; but, how do you resolve? Is it still your wish to stand in the Squire's shoes?"

"Top-boots?" suggested Dan.

"Of course it is," replied the evil spirit for him. "Who would not have such wish, to pass his days in luxury and ease, not labor – pinched, in care and penury?"

"Thrue for you," observed Dan, approvingly.

"But who would give up even a small share of joy, contentment, and domestic love, to seek, perchance, for more, perchance, for less?" replied the other.

"There's rayson in that," said Dan.

"Aye, but the boy," said his left-hand companion; "see what a glorious life the heir to such a wealthy man would lead."

"That sets me heart bubblin' like a bilin' pot," cried Dan, joyously.

"You are resolved, then, to be ruled by me?" demanded the suggester of evil thoughts.

"Indeed, and I am, that I am, just for the sake of the babby," said Dan.

"Follow, and I will point out a way," said the dark spirit, gliding towards the door. Dan made a movement to follow, when his footsteps were arrested by a chorus of invisible voices, small, but distinct, and musical as a choir of singing birds, that appeared to sound within his very brain, so that he heard every word as clearly as though he had uttered it himself.

Every mortal has his grief:
Each one thinks that his is chief.
Better keep your present lot,
Than to tempt – you don't know what.

Irresolution made him falter on the threshold through which the spirit of evil thoughts had just passed; it was but for an instant, however, for the same tiny voices sang within his heart the blessings and the joys of wealth, and, above all, the image of his darling child, made happy in its possession.

"Here goes," said he. "The divil a pin's point does it matther what comes of me, so that luck lays a howld of the little gossoon." So saying, he followed the dark spirit, while the other bowed its lovely head upon its breast, and shedding tears of anguish for the tempted one, whose weakness she had not the power to strengthen, slowly and pensively came after, resolved not to abandon her charge while there was yet a hope to save.

CHAPTER III

Our selfish pleasures multiply amain,
But then their countless progeny is pain.

We left the great Squire Bulworthy, preparing to astonish the neighborhood, which he assuredly succeeded in doing, but not in a style at all creditable or satisfactory to himself.

It would appear, indeed, as though the hearty, but uncharitable wish of the irritated cobbler, was curiously prophetic, for, before the purse-proud couple had achieved the half of their accustomed promenade, Mr. Bulworthy's extremities were suddenly and unceremoniously fastened upon by an unusually severe gripe of that enemy to active exercise – the gout. So sharp was the pain, that the Squire roared out right lustily, and executed such a variety of absurd contortions that he became an object of intense amusement, rather than sympathy, to the vagabond portion of the neighborhood.

There being no such extemporaneous means of transit as hacks, or "hansoms," attainable, there was nothing for it but to suffer; so, leaning heavily upon a couple of stray Samaritans, whose commiseration was warmly stimulated by the promised shilling, he managed, by slow and agonizing efforts, to shuffle home, attended by his silent and unsympathizing spouse.

After having undergone the excruciating process of unbooting – an operation whose exquisite sensations are known only to the initiated – he screamed for his universal panacea, whisky-punch. The materials were brought in an incredibly short space of time, for Bulworthy was murderous in his gouty spells. Half a dozen stiff tumblers were disposed of with Hibernian celerity, and the hurried household began to congratulate itself upon a prospect of quiet. Vain hope! "dingle, dingle, ding!" went the big bell at the Squire's elbow. Up started, simultaneously, Barney and Mary from the dish of comfort they were laying themselves out to indulge in down stairs – in their eagerness, tumbling into each other's arms. Barney rushed up the stairway, while Mary listened – as Marys always do, when there's anything interesting going on – receiving, however, in this instance, ample reward for such a breach of good manners, being nearly prostrated by a book flung at Barney's head, to hasten his exit, by the suffering Squire. What the missile had only half done, Barney finished; for, taking the kitchen-stairs at a slide, he came plump against the partially-stunned listener, and down they both rolled comfortably to the bottom. However, as there were no bones broken, the only damage being what Mary called, "a dent in her head," they soon picked themselves up again.

"Well," says Mary, "how is he now?"

"Oh, murdher alive, don't ax me," replied Barney, rubbing his bruises, "it's my belief that there never was sich a cantankerous ould chicken sence the world was hatched. It's a composin' draft that he's schreechin' for now, as av a gallion of punch, strong enough to slide on, wasn't composin'."

In due time, he had his "composin' draft," which, as it contained a pretty considerable dose of laudanum, sufficed, together with his other potations, to lull the pain somewhat, and give him comparative quiet; this was a famous opportunity for Mrs. Bulworthy, who immediately proceeded to "improve" it.

"Now, Pether, dear," said she, with an attempt to modulate her saw-cutting voice into something approaching to tenderness, which was a failure. "Oh! think upon the situation of your soul, and look over one of these comforting works."

Peter groaned inwardly, but said nothing.

"Grace," she went on, "is never denied, even to the most hardenedest sinner."

Peter threw his head back and closed his eyes, in the forlorn hope that she would respect his simulated slumber; but she was not a woman to respect anything, when her "vocation" was strong on her.

"It's criminal in you, Peter," she shouted, "to neglect your spiritual state; suppose you were to die, and it's my belief you will, for you're looking dreadful, what a misery it would be to me; I'd never forgive myself; oh! Pether, Pether, do read this true and beautiful description of the place of torment you're a blindly plunging your sowl into."

This was too much for the already tortured sinner. "Get out!" he roared. "Don't bother; there's a time for all things, you indiscreet and unnatural apostle of discomfortableness, what do you worry me for now, when you see me enjoyin' such a multiplication of bodily sufferings?"

"Because," said she, coolly; "it's the only time that I can hope to make an impression upon your hardened heart; it's my duty, not only as your wife, but as a member of the society for the evangelizing the home heathen; of which heathen, my dear, I have the word of my pious associates, you are an outrageous example; therefore, it is my mission to do all I can to bring about your regeneration."

"Murdher, murdher! if I could only use my feet," groaned Bulworthy, with the suppressed anger boiling in his face.

"Ah? but you can't," replied the home comfort, as she quietly removed everything portable from within the reach of the sufferer's arm, and settling herself in rigid implacability, prepared to do battle with the evil one.

"Since you won't use your bodily senses for your soul's advantage," said she, solemnly, "I will, myself, peruse these pages of admonition."

Now, there cannot be a doubt but that the work Mrs. Bulworthy prepared to read, was an excellent one, written by an excellent person, and distributed for a most excellent purpose; but, to say the least, it was very injudicious in the absorbingly-pious lady to exhibit so much concern for the immortal part of poor Bulworthy, altogether overlooking the mortal anguish he was at the present moment enduring.

At all events, *he* thought so, for, what with the pain and the rage, he commenced a series of bellowings, in the expectation that his other tormentor would be recalled to the necessity of directing her mind from the future, to the suffering before her; but, no, not a bit of it; the louder he roared, the shriller she read, being a contest, as she imagined, between the fierce obstinacy of the demon within him, and the efficacy of her ministration; on she went, inflexibly, in the prolonged cadence of the conventicle, never ceasing or averting her strong eye from the tract, until she had finished its perusal. Not a word of it did he, *would* he hear, for, with yelling occasionally, and stopping his ears at intervals, the blessed communication might have been written in its original Sanscrit, for all the good it did him.

However, she had done her duty, and was satisfied. "Temper, temper, Pether," she ejaculated, as he heaved a groan of impatience from one of the twinges. "Suffer patiently; it is good for the flesh to be mortified; think of the worse that is to come."

"Oh! you're a comforter if ever there was one," sighed the Squire. "How the mischief can I be patient with a coal of fire on every toe of me? It's mighty aisy for thim that doesn't feel it to keep gabblin' about patience. I'll roar if I like; it does me good to swear at the murdherin' thing, and I will, too."

Whereupon, he let fly a volley of epithets, not the very choicest in the vernacular, which had at least one good effect, for it sent the domestic missionary flying out of the room, tracts and all, utterly horrified at the outburst of impiety; he firing a parting shot or two after her, loaded with purely personal charges of not over complimentary character.

It was just at this moment that his opposite neighbor, the poor cobbler, having arrived at the most comforting part of his reflections, was indulging in one of his jolliest songs, the merry sound of which penetrated to the apartment of the suffering rich man, filling his heart with envy.

"Listen to that," he grunted, swaying backward and forward from the intensity of the pain. "What's the use av all my money; there's that blaggard cobbler, without a rap to bless himself with, and the song's never out of his vagabone throat; oh, murdher! if I wouldn't give every shillin' that I'm worth in the world to change conditions with the chirpin' schemer."

In a short time, however, the composing drafts, spirituous and otherwise, began to do their work; a drowsy sensation crept over him, and he dropped into an unquiet slumber.

When he awoke again, which was instantly, as he thought, what was his surprise to behold an extraordinary-looking sprite riding upon his worst foot. The thing was dressed like a jockey, cap, jacket, breeches, and boots, the latter being furnished with a pair of needles instead of spurs; but with such a comical face that Bulworthy would have laughed heartily at its funny expression, except that the sight of those ominous goads effectually checked all thoughts of risibility.

"Who the devil are you? Get off o' my toe, you impudent little scoundrel," said the Squire, "or I'll fling a pill-box at you."

"Bless you, that would be no use," piped the diminutive jock, settling himself in his saddle.

"Move, I say, or bang goes this bottle of doctor's stuff right in yer eye."

"Fire away," says the imp, with a little bit of a laugh, like the squeak of a mouse, "I don't fear any of your doctor's bedevilment."

"What brings you here, anyway?" demanded Bulworthy. He was now out of pain, and consequently waxing arrogant.

"You," squeaked the little rider.

"It's a lie. I never invited you."

"Oh, yes, you did, and moreover, I must say, treated me like a prince; boarded and lodged me gloriously."

"Pooh! you're a fool. Where did I lodge you?"

"Here, in your foot," said the little devil, with a grin, accompanying the observation with the slightest touch of the needle; enough, however, to extort a yell from the Squire. "What do you think of that, my hero?" the jockey continued. "It will be better for you to keep a civil tongue in that foolish head of yours."

"Oh, I will! I will!" groaned Bulworthy. "If you'll only obleege me by dismountin', I'll promise anything."

"Oh, yes, that's mighty likely," said the imp, "after being asked here to amuse myself. A pretty sort of a host you are."

"If you'll believe me, there's some mistake, sir, indeed there is," said Bulworthy, apologetically, "I don't remember ever havin' had the honor of your acquaintance."

"You don't, don't you; then, here goes, to put you in mind, you forgetful old savage;" with that, he commenced a series of equestrian manœuvres with the Squire's intractable toe, now sawing with the diminutive chifney bit, now tickling the sides with a slender, but very cutting kind of a whip, finishing up his exercises by plunging both spurs into the flesh, making the tortured limb jump like a Galway hunter over a stone wall.

"Stop! stop!" roared the sufferer, while the perspiration rained from his forehead like a shower-bath.

"You know me now, do you, eh?"

"Yes, yes," gasped the Squire. "I'll never forget you again – never, never!"

"Will you be civil?" – a slight touch of the needle.

"Oh, murdher! yes."

"And temperate?" – another small puncture.

"I will, I will."

"Very well, then. I'll not only dismount, as I'm a little tired, but I'll give you a word or two of good advice." So saying, the little jockey got out of his seat, put his saddle on his shoulders, and having with great difficulty clambered up the flannel precipice of Bulworthy's leg, managed, with the assistance of his waistcoat buttons, to mount upon the table, where, sitting down upon a pill-box, he crossed his legs, and leisurely switching his top-boots, regarded the Squire with a look of intense cunning.

"Well, only to think," said Bulworthy to himself, "that such a weeny thing as that could give a man such a heap of oneasiness; a fella that I could smash with my fist as I would a fly: may I never get up from this if I don't do it, and then may-be I'll get rid of the murdherin' torment altogether."

With that, he suddenly brought his great hand down on the table with a bang that, as he supposed, exterminated jockey, pill-box, and all.

"Ha, ha!" he roared, "there's an end to you, my fine fella."

"Not a bit of it," squealed the little ruffian; "what do you say to this?" he continued, as he flourished one of the top-boots over his head, and buried the spur through the Squire's finger, fastening it firmly to the table. "See what you got for your wicked intentions, and that ain't the worst of it neither, for I'm going to serve that elegant big thumb of yours the same way. But I'll take my time about it, for there's no fear of your hands ever stirring from that spot until I like." So saying, the tantalizing fiend made several fierce attempts to transfix the doomed member, each time just grazing the skin with the sharp needle. At last he drove it right up to the heel, and there the two boots stuck, while the little blackguard danced the "Foxhunter's jig," in his stocking-feet, cutting pigeon-wings among the pill-boxes, like a professor.

Bulworthy now roared louder than ever, vainly endeavoring to free his tortured hand from its strange imprisonment, and the more he roared, the more his tormentor grinned, and cut capers about the table.

"Oh, pull out them thunderin' spurs," cried he, in agony. "This is worse than all; mercy, mercy! Misther jockey, I beg your pardon for what I did; it was the drink; there's whisky in me."

"I know that well enough," chirped the grinning imp. "If there wasn't, I couldn't have the power over you that you see."

"Oh, won't you look over it this oncet? I'll be on me Bible oath I won't offend you again."

"Are you in earnest this time?"

"Bad luck attend me if I'm not."

"Well, then, I'll trust you, though you don't deserve it," replied the little schemer, and, after two or three tugs, he succeeded in pulling out one of the spurs. "Do you feel easier?" inquired he, with a grin.

"It's like getting half-way out of purgatory," said the Squire, with a sigh of relief. "There's a fine fella, lug out the other, won't you?"

"I must make some conditions first."

"Let them be short, for gracious sake!"

"First and foremost, are you going to be quiet and reasonable?"

"I am, I am!"

"Secondly, are you going to pay me for the trouble I've had?"

"Whatever you ask, only be quick about it."

"It won't tax you much, you have only to make over to me all the bottles and jars you have in the house."

"Take them, and welcome."

"If you'll promise me not to meddle with them, I'll leave them in your keeping, only they're mine, remember."

"Every drop," cried the Squire, eagerly. "I won't touch another mouthful."

"That's all right; you keep your word and I'll keep mine; there, you may have the use of your fist once more," he continued, as he plucked out the other spur, giving the released hand a parting kick that thrilled through every joint.

"And now," said he, as he pulled on his tiny boots, "I have a word or two more to say to you; you made a foolish wish just now; that you'd like to change places with that miserable cobbler over the way; are you still of the same way of thinking?"

"Should I have your companionship there," inquired Bulworthy.

"Certainly not; he couldn't afford to keep me," replied the gout-fiend, contemptuously.

"Then, without meanin' the slightest offence to you, my little friend," said the other, "it wouldn't grieve me much to get rid of your acquaintance at any sacrifice, even to the disgust of walking into that rascally cobbler's shoes. I'm only afraid that, clever as you are, you can't manage that for me."

"Don't be quite so sure," replied the little jockey, with a knowing wink, amusing himself by every now and then tickling up Bulworthy's fingers with his sharp whip, every stroke of which seemed to cut him to the marrow. "Who can tell but that the poor, ignorant devil would like to change places with *you*; if so, I can do the job for ye both in a jiffey: more, betoken, here he comes, so that we can settle the affair at once."

At that instant, the door of Bulworthy's apartment flew open, as from the effect of a sudden and strong gust of wind, while he, although seeing nothing, distinctly heard a slight rustling, and felt that peculiar sensation one receives at the entrance of persons into a room while not looking in their direction.

"I see no one," said the Squire; "'twas but a blast of wind."

"*I* do," curtly replied the little jockey, and then proceeded to hold an interesting confidential chat with the invisibilities; in a few moments, Bulworthy distinguished the jolly voice of Dan, the cobbler, a little jollier than usual; indicating the high state of his spiritual temperament also, by swaying to and fro against the balusters, making them creak loudly in his uncertain progress; at last, with a tipsy "God save all here," he lumbered into the room, tried to clutch at a chair, but, optically miscalculating his distance, overshot the mark, and tumbled head-long upon the floor.

"You dirty, drunken rapscallion," cried Bulworthy, getting into a towering rage, from which, however, he was quickly recalled by a wicked look from the imp, and a threatening movement towards the dreaded top-boots and spurs.

"Listen, and say nothing until you are spoken to," said the little chap, as grand as you please.

"Not a word," replied the cowed Squire.

"Now, Daniel, my friend, I want to have a talk with you." The Squire started with astonishment; he could have sworn that he heard his own voice; but the big sounds proceeded from the lips of the little chap on the table beside him.

"Wid all the veins of my heart, Squire, jewel," replied Dan's voice, though Dan's mouth never opened at all, and Bulworthy was looking him straight in the face.

"You are not satisfied with your condition in life," continued the voice.

"You never spoke a truer word nor that," replied Dan's invisible proxy.

"Neither am I."

"More fool you."

"Would you change places with me?"

"Indeed, an' I would if I had the chance; how would you like to be in mine?"

"It's just what I long for."

Thus far, the conversation was carried on in the voices of the Squire and the cobbler; but now they were both amazed at hearing bellowed out, in sounds like the roar of a cataract when you stop your ears occasionally:

"Blind and dissatisfied mortals, have your desire; let each take the shape and fill the station of the other, never to obtain your original form and condition until both are as united in the wish to return thereto as you are now to quit them."

A terrific thunderclap burst overhead, stunning them both for a few minutes, and, when its last reverberation died away in the distance, the little jockey had disappeared, all supernatural sounds had ceased. The sentient part of the discontented Squire found itself inhabiting the mortal form of the cobbler, prone on the floor, hopelessly and helplessly drunk, while the unhappy Dan appeared in the portly form, and suffered the gouty pangs of the rich Mr. Bulworthy.

CHAPTER IV

"Oft do we envy those whose lot, if known,
Would prove to be less kindly than our own."

The change accomplished by the embodied wishes of the two discontented mortals was, to all appearance, perfect. They bore, indeed, the outward semblance each of the other, but yet retained their own individual thoughts, feelings, and inclinations; and manifold, as may be imagined, were the embarrassments and annoyances consequent upon this strange duality, to the great mystification of their respective households.

The morning after the singular compact was made, the more than usually outrageous conduct of the supposed Bulworthy placed the establishment in the greatest possible uproar, for the nerves and sinews of the imprisoned Dan, wholly unacquainted, ere this, with any ailment other than the emptiness of hunger, or the occasional headache whisky purchased, now twisted and stretched with the sharper agonies laid up by his predecessor, lashed him into an absolute hurricane of fury. Unable to move his nether extremities, he gnashed his teeth, venting his rage by smashing everything that he could reach.

This terrible turmoil reached the ears of the domestics, filling them with apprehension.

"Be good to us," said Mary. "What is it now?"

"Ora, don't ax me," replied Barney, who had just come down from the caged lion. "It's fairly bewildhered I am, out an' out; I wouldn't wondher av it was burn the house about our ears he would, in one of his tanthrums."

"What's worryin' him now?"

"Faix, the misthress is at the head ov it, an' the gout's at the feet, an', between the two, I wouldn't be surprised av his thrunk was imptied afore long."

Up stairs the tempest raged with undiminished fury.

"I tell you I won't, I won't," roared the impatient patient. "I never could taste a dhrop of physic in my life."

"Oh, my! what a fib," said his consoler, the sweet-voiced Mrs. Bulworthy. "Why, you've swallowed enough to kill a regiment of decent people. Indeed, I don't know what's come over you to day, at all; you're not a bit like yourself."

"The devil I'm not," said the other, somewhat alarmed; but a glance at his swathed extremities, accompanied by a spasm of pain, gave him uncomfortable assurance that he was still in the Squire's skin. "Bedad, ma'm," he went on, "if you and the gout ain't enough to drive a man out of himself, I don't know what would; get out, I tell you, and leave me alone; one at a time's enough."

"Will you promise to read this tract, then?"

"It's a mighty fine time to talk about readin'. How much money am I worth?"

"You surely don't forget that, Pether?"

"Well, indeed, what with the pain and other little matters, it has slipped my memory."

"Just eight thousand six hundred pounds."

"As much as that? murdher alive! you don't say so; then let us pack up and be off," cried he, with an injudicious bound of pleasure that brought the corkscrew into his joints with redoubled acuteness.

"Go, where?" inquired Mrs. Bulworthy, as coolly as though she were enjoying the agony which revelled through his racked frame.

"Anywhere," screamed he. "Anywhere out of this vagabone neighborhood. Ah! tear an aiges av I thought I was going to be massacreed in this way, I'd a stayed as I was; it's to the very marrow of my bones that I'm sorry for it now."

"Sorry for what, Pether?" said Mrs. Bulworthy; "what in the name of gracious are you raving about?"

"Nothing," replied he, "only it's ravin' with the hunger I am; I feel as if I hadn't had anything to eat for six weeks or more."

"Sure, won't you have something in a few minutes," said she. "There's the turtle soup and curried lobster you ordered for lunch getting ready as fast as it can."

"You don't tell me that; may-be I won't astonish it then," said he, smacking his lips at the delicious anticipation of devouring dishes that, to him, were hitherto apocryphal things.

"Is there anything else you want before I go?"

"Nothing in the world, except, may-be, you might just run over the way and see how Mrs. Duff and the babby is."

"Heigh-day!" screamed Mrs. Bulworthy, bestowing upon him one of her most indignant glances. "I'd like to know what business you have to be thinking of Mrs. Duff and her babby!"

"Would you, really, ma'm? then, if your curiosity is anyway tickled, I'll have you to understand that it's a mighty high regard I entertain for them two people," replied he.

"You do, do you? why, then, it's a face you have to say that same to me, you dirty, miserable, money-scrapin' ignoramus; me, that took such care of your body and sowl for so many years."

"Read one of your papers, ma'm; practice what you preach," suggested the fictitious Bulworthy.

"How would you look if I was to say that I had a regard for the cobbler himself, since you're so mightily interested in his wife?" said she, with an injured-woman air and look.

"Say, ma'm! Bedad, I'd say that the cobbler isn't such a fool as to return the compliment," replied the other, in a provoking tone, that made the eyes of Mrs. Bulworthy flash green like those of a cat in the dark.

"I'm not so sure of that," she retorted, with a meaning toss of her fallacious curls, that implied unspeakable things.

"But I *am*, you see, strange as it may appear, ma'm," he went on, with a jolly laugh, strangled suddenly by a gouty pang that made him roar again.

"Serve you right, you ungrateful reprobate; I saw you this morning flinging your good-for-nothing eyes at the jade; but I'll serve you out for it, see if I don't; you shall have a blessed time, if ever a man had in the world, you vile, deceitful, double-faced old porcupine; after the years we've been together, too, slavin' and working to scrape up the bit of money to be the comfort of our old age," she continued, diverging into the sentimental, and dropping a few hard tears, that fell from her cold eyes like pellets of hail. "You want to break my heart, you do, you murderer, that you may follow your wicked coorses without hendrance. Mrs. Duff and her babby; indeed, *her* babby! how do I know who's babby it is?" and she looked green-eyed monsters at the supposititious Squire, who heightened her fiery temper up to explosion-point, by replying, with a chuckle.

"Faix, the babby's mine, I b'leeve."

Now be it understood that, for the instant, his disputable identity was forgotten, and it was all *Dan* that spoke:

"Yours," shrieked the now infuriated female, making a threatening demonstration towards him.

"Yes – no – I mean – oh, murdher, I forgot I was ould Bulworthy for a minnit. It's a rise I was takin' out of you, that's all," he went on, "just for the fun of the thing."

The further discussion of this delicate subject was put a stop to by the entrance of Barney and Mary with the Squire's lunch; a very gratifying and timely interruption to the stormy *tête-à-tête*, in the opinion of one of the party, at all events.

The delicious condiments being duly served, from which arose an appetizing odor, stimulating Dan's appetite into ravenous hunger, "Won't you sit down, ma'm," said he, "and take a mouthful?"

"Indeed, and it's polite you are, all of a sudden. You never asked the like before, but was always glad enough to get me out of sight that you might gormandize to your heart's content," replied

she, acrimoniously. "But it's a sure sign that you are guilty of something wrong somewhere, with somebody, or you wouldn't be so extra accommodating."

"Sit down, and howld yer prate," cried the other, anxious to attack the tempting viands.

"I won't, you ould sinner. I know you don't want me, it's only your conscience that's giving you no rest. I'll leave you to stuff and cram, and I only wish it was pison, that I do." With this pleasant observation, hissed viperously through her closed teeth, she flounced out of the room, giving the door a parting bang that sent an electric shock of pain through poor Dan's nervous system.

"Oh! milliah murdher," groaned he, "an' this is the agreeable speciment of a walkin' vinegar-cruet, that I left my scanty but comfortable home, and the angel that made a heaven of it, for. Well, the fools ain't all gone yet – but, never mind, isn't there the money and the eatin'; so, here goes to have a feed that 'ud take the concate out of a hungry elephant."

So saying, he lifted off the cover, and plunged the ladle into the steaming tureen, when, to his enormous surprise, instead of the savory mess he anticipated, he fished up and deposited upon his plate, the identical little jockey before described, spurs and all.

"How are you, Mr. Duff?" said he, touching his cap in true stable style, as he seated himself upon the raised edge of the soup-plate.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," replied Dan, reverentially, for he was a firm believer in "the good people," that is to say, the fairies, and dreaded the immensity of their power.

"We haven't met before, to be sure," said the little fellow, "but you see I know who you are, in spite of that fleshy stuffing you have got into."

"Bedad, there's no mistake about that, sir," replied Dan. "Would it be too great a liberty to ax what it is I'm indebted to for the honor of your company at this particular time?"

"Certainly not, Dan. The fact is, between you and me, I'm always present where there's such good cheer to be found as I see before me."

"Indeed, sir, an' would it inconvenience you much to sit somewhere else, for I'm mortial hungry at this present minit, an' I'm afeard I'd be splashin' your boots with the gravy."

"Anything to oblige," said the other, jumping over the edge of the plate, like a four-year old.

"Thank you, sir. I'll do as much for you, provided it's in my power," observed the hungry cobbler, drawing nearer a huge dish of curried lobster, the spice-laden steam from which would create a new appetite in repletion's self. Heaping up his plate, while his mouth filled with water at the glorious sight, he was just about to shovel a vast quantity into his capacious mouth, when a sharp

"Stop, Dan!" from the little jockey, arrested his hand mid-way.

"Do you know the result of your eating that mouthful?"

"Never a bit of me, sir," said Dan, making another movement towards his head.

"Ha! wait till I tell you," cried the other.

Dan stopped again. "This is wonderful tantalizin' to an impty Christian," said he.

"Listen, Dan. I have a sort of regard for you, and so I'll give you this warning: If you swallow that stuff that's overloading your knife" – Dan wasn't genteel in his eating – "I'll have to ride a hurdle race upon your big toe, and I'll be bail that I'll make it beat all the rest of your anatomy in the way of jumping."

"You don't mean that?" cried Dan, dropping knife and all into the plate before him.

"Every word of it," said the little fellow.

"Oh, get out! you're not in airnest?"

"May-be you'd like to try?"

"Be the mortial o' war, I don't b'leeve you, anyway the hungriness is drivin' all consequences out of me reckonin', so, here goes, jump or no jump." So, with a desperate recklessness, Dan rushed greedily at the eatables, and never in his life did he eat the tithe part of what he demolished upon this occasion. Everything on the table disappeared before his all-devouring appetite, like smoke, and

as the materials were handy, he topped all up with a "screechin' hot" tumbler of whisky-punch, stiff enough to poke courage into any man's heart.

In the meantime, wholly absorbed in his prodigious banquet, he had quite lost sight of his friend, the jockey; but now, as with a sigh of intense satisfaction, he reclined back in the cushioned chair, he became sensible of a sort of fidgetiness about his foot, and on looking down, what should he see but the little chap, very busy indeed, with his whip in his mouth, saddling up his big toe, as gingerly as you please. He was just giving the girth a last pull, which he accompanied with the usual jerking expression, making Dan wince a little, from a sense of tightness in the nag.

The business-like manner of the chap, however, soon banished the uncomfortable feeling, and so excited Dan's risibilities, that the tears rolled down his cheeks with uncontrollable laughter. It is astonishing how very near the surface the leverage of a good dinner and a warm "tod," lifts up one's jolly feelings.

Dan was now in a condition to sign a treaty of perpetual amity with all mankind.

Delusive tranquillity!

"Mount," cried the little rider, jumping into his saddle. "Hurrah! off we go! heigh!"

The first slash of the whip and dig of the spur changed the nature of Dan's emotions most effectually. He roared, he raged, he twisted about like an eel on a spear. Still fiercely and unmercifully the little jockey plied the lash and the goad. Still he shouted, "Hurrah! jump, you devil, jump!"

Now, Dan swore like a rapparee; now, he called upon every saint in the calendar; but there was no cessation to his torture. In the extremity of his fury, he flung the whisky-bottle at the little rider's head; but as it struck his own foot, it only augmented the terrible agony.

From praying and swearing he fell to weeping, but the stony-hearted little tyrant was not assailable by tears or entreaties. Promises of amendment were equally useless; until, at last, happening to recollect what a horror all supernaturals have of the pure element, he seized a tumbler of water, and nearly drowned his tormentor with its contents. This had the desired effect. The little vagabond dismounted with a shrill cry of annoyance, and rushed over towards the fire-place, to dry his soaked garments.

"Ha, ha! you thief of the world, I know what'll settle your hash now – wather!" said Dan, instantly relieved from pain; "and, wid a blessin', you shall have enough of that same, if ever you venture to come hurdle-racin' on any toes o' mine.

"Stick to that Dan, my hero," said the little fellow, as he shook the drops off his drenched jacket; "stick to that, and you may depend upon it that I'll never trouble you any more."

And so, having got rid of his enemy, Dan snuggled himself back into the comfortable easy-chair, and very soon forgot himself and all the real world, in the perplexities and comic horrors of a dyspeptic dream.

CHAPTER V

Within the home where jealousy is found,
A Upas grows that poisons all around.

It would be as unprofitable as impossible to follow the ever-varying images of a dream, which, apparently consumed the best part of a century; every half hour of which had its separate distress, although the actual period of time passed did not reach ten minutes, to such singular and enormous expansion was the imagination swollen. The few placid moments distorted into numberless years of terror, like the drop of seemingly pure water, resolved, by microscopic power, into an ocean of repulsive monsters.

Dan had just been very properly condemned to death for the five and twentieth time, and had waited in gasping dread for the infliction of some inconceivable – except under such circumstances – mode of bodily torture, when he heard a tremendous noise, like the explosion of an immense piece of ordnance, close by his side. With a nervous start, that benumbed his frame like a powerful shock, he awoke, bathed in perspiration and half dead with fright. The sound was repeated. It was a simple, single, hesitating little knock at the chamber-door.

"Who's there?" he stammered, scarcely yet aroused to the consciousness of his identity.

"It's me, sir," replied a gentle voice, that thrilled through him with different sensations, for delight and joy stole over him like a sun-ray. It was his wife's.

"Come in, Peg," said he, "for an angel that you are. If it wasn't for this blessed interruption I'd have died in my bed with the wear an' tear of murdherin' bad dreams." He would fain have rushed into Peggy's arms as she entered, but the first attempt at making use of his continuations painfully reminded him that they belonged to somebody else. It also admonished him that it was necessary for him to support his new character with dignity.

"Well, ma'm," said he, "what do you mean by disturbin' me in this unprincipled way?"

"Indeed, sir," replied Peggy, timidly, "an' I'm a'most ashamed to tell you; it's that man o' mine over the way, sir; sure, I don't know what's come to him, at all, at all, within the last few hours."

"Ho! ho!" thought Dan, he's had a quare time of it as well as myself. "What's the matter with him, Mrs. Duffy?"

"That's what I want to know, sir, av anybody'd only tell me; I never knew him to kick up such tanthrums ever since we come together; musha! sure, an' the devil's in him if ever he enthered a mortal body, this blessed day – an' *dhrink!* murdher alive, sir, av he wouldn't dhrink the *say* dhry av he only had the swally, I'm not here."

"That's bad, very bad, indeed," said the other, oracularly. "People should never indulge in such terrible propensities," he went on, with a bold attempt at Bulworthy's phraseology.

"Sure, sir, doesn't it depend upon what dhrives them to it?" replied Peggy. "Throuble's mighty dhrouthy, sir, intirely; it dhrys up a poor man's throat as if there was a fire in his mouth, and, indeed, me poor Dan's poorer nor the poorest this holy day."

"That's no rayson, ma'm," said the other, with mock sternness, although his frame was in a glow of joy at hearing how Peggy managed to find excuses for his favorite failing. "That's no rayson, ma'm; the more fool him for addin' flame to the fire."

"Thrue for you, sir, but then doesn't it dhrownd the blaze for the time?"

"I'll answer ye that, Mrs. Duff, if you please, allygorically; did ye ever see a few dhrops of sperrets flung into a blazin' fire? a murdherin' lot of dhrowndin' there is about it; bedad, the fire only burns with greater strength."

"Then, of coorse, your honor, it stands to good sense that it's foolish to take *only* a few dhrops," she replied, with a sly look at the Squire, that made the laugh bubble all over his ruddy face.

"One would a'most suppose that you loved this Dan of yours," said he.

"Love him, sir! do the spring flowers love the sun? does the young mother love her new-born babby?"

"Oh! murdher, murdher! listen to this," cried Dan; "an' me shut up inside of this prison of a carcass; it was a mortial sin to leave her, an' I'm sufferin' for it as I ought, an' it sarves me right." The thought made him savage, so turning to poor Peggy with a look of anger, he continued, fiercely:

"What brought you here, ma'm? may-be you'll condescind to inform me at oncet."

"Oh! sir, don't be angry wid him, but its outrageous intirely that he is; sure, he wants somethin' that I'm afeared to ax."

"What is it? don't keep me waitin' all day."

"I hope yer honor will take into considheration the way he's in just now, for he sthole out onbeknown to me, an' how he got the sup, I can't tell; but it's on him dhreadful, or he'd never think of the likes."

"The likes of what? what's throublin' him now? speak out, woman, or you'll drive the little bit of patience that I have clean out of me."

"Then, sir, the long an' the short of it is, an' I dunno what put such foolishness in his head, he towld me to ax yer honor, if yer honor had a thrifle of that soup left; he'd take it as a mighty great favor if yer honor would let him have the least taste in life of it," said Peggy, with an extreme misgiving as to how so presumptuous a request would be received.

"Is that all?" said Dan, calmly, to her intense relief. "Take it, an' welcome, Mrs. Duff, an' if it does him as much good as it did me you won't be throubled wid such a message again, I'll be bound; there's the vagabone stuff in that big bowl over on the sideboard fornenst you; an' tell him, by the same token, from me, that av he feels at all uncomfortable in his present quarthers, it wouldn't kill me right out to swap again."

"Swap what, sir?" inquired Peggy, rather mystified.

"Oh! he'll know what I mean."

"And so do I," screamed the irate Mrs. Bulworthy rushing into the room, at the door of which, she had been listening during the entire conversation, the spirit of which had inflamed her jealous temperament up to fever heat.

"I know what you want to swap, you ill-conditioned profligate," she went on, in true Zantippe style. "You want to swap wives, don't you?"

"Faix, an' you never said a thruer word," coolly replied Dan.

This was too much for the excited dame; with a yell of fury she rushed at Peggy, and would assuredly have indented the marks of all her finger-nails in her comely countenance, but that the other, finding the door conveniently open, snatched up the tureen of soup and fled down stairs like a phantom.

Her prey thus escaping, the shock of her terrible rage was concentrated upon the head of the devoted Dan; to what grievous extremity it would carry her he had not an idea, but he felt that something awful was about to take place.

"Considher my misfortunes," he cried, "and be merciful, Mrs. Bulworthy."

Implacable as the embodied Parcæ, she advanced towards him.

"You're not goin' to murdher me, woman," he roared.

Silently, she approached still nearer, desperation was in her aspect.

"Help, murdher, help!" cried Dan, inevitable fate seeming to be on the point of overwhelming him in some way or another.

"What the divil is the ould monsther goin' to do?" thought he, as a frightful suspicion raised his flesh into little hillocks, and made his hair sting his head like needle-points, when he saw her

deliberately take a singular-looking phial and pour out a few drops of a fiery red liquor, filling the rest of the glass with water, through which the former hissed and eddied for a few moments, and then subsided into a horrible blackness.

"Drink this," she ejaculated, solemnly, "and pay the penalty of your infamous conduct."

"What is it?" he inquired, in a voice of alarm.

"Poison! you profligate," replied the other, regarding him with a Borgian expression.

"Holy Vargin! an' me screwed into the floor wid this *threfalian* gout," gasped Dan, his face bedewed with the effect of his mental agony. "Stop! you murdherin' ould witch! Stop! you have no right to sarve me this way. I don't belong to you at all," cried Dan, as a last resource.

"What do you mean by that, you miserable sinner?"

"I mean that you're no wife o' mine, the Lord be praised for it."

"Would you deny your honest wife, you cannibal?"

"I would – I do," cried he, desperately.

"You're not my husband?"

"I'll be upon my Bible oath I'm not."

"What – not Bulworthy?"

"The divil a toe, ma'm, savin' yer presence. I'm Dan Duff, the cobbler, from over the way."

"Oh, the man's mad – mad as a coot," said Mrs. Bulworthy, with appalling calmness, "and it would only be a mercy to put him out of his misery, soon an' suddent."

"*Tear an aigers*, av I only had the use of these blaggard legs of mine, wouldn't I make an example of ye, you ould witch of Endher," muttered Dan. "I won't be slaughtered without an offer to save myself, any way." With that, he started to his feet, and to his great surprise and delight discovered that his powers of locomotion were unimpeded. With a wild hurroo! he jumped, as only a Munster man can jump, and dancing over to the now thoroughly alarmed Squiress, who could see nothing in such extravagance but a confirmation of his utter insanity, he lifted her in his arms as though she were a rag doll.

"Now, ma'm," said he, "I'll see if I can't cure your propensity for pison. Into that closet you'll go, and out of it you sha'n't budge until you come to your senses, or I come to myself; and I'm afeard that one's as far off as the other – worse luck for both of us;" and so, without the slightest attempt at resistance on her part, not knowing to what extremity this outburst of madness would lead him, he snugly deposited her ladyship in a corner cupboard, which he locked, and put the key in his pocket, accompanying the whole movement with a paroxysm of laughter, so long and loud that she congratulated herself upon the slight shelter thus afforded her, and only feared that the next phase in his malady would be of more sanguinary a nature.

This great feat accomplished, Dan threw himself back in the easy-chair, and began seriously to ruminate upon his present condition and his future prospects.

"This, then, is what I left my blessed Peg and the blesseder babby for; to live a life of gout and conthrariness, never to have any confidence in my muscles, but always thremblin' for feard that sharp-spurred jockey would take a fancy for a canther, or, what's worse even than that, to be in dhread of the penethratin' tongue of ould mother Gab, yondher, whinever I'm laid by the leg; oh! if iver there was a poor sinner that repinted, it's myself that's last on the list, an' greatest; could I only see the darlin' of a sperret that gev me the good advice I so foolishly kicked at, it's beg her pardon on my bended knees – that I would, if it was hot cendhers that was undher them."

At that instant, he was aware of the gentlest of all gentle touches on his shoulder, and on turning his head in the direction, sure enough, there she was.

Dan was prostrate before her, in a moment. "Ora good luck and long life to you, miss, for comin' to me in my disthress; I don't deserve it, I know I don't."

"Get up, Mr. Duff," said the spirit. "I am but the reflection of your better thoughts; therefore, you must proffer your repentance, through me, to the throne of One who rules us both."

"I will, I will," cried the other; "truly and wholly," covering his face with his hands, through which the tears now streamed copiously.

"What is your wish?" inquired the good spirit.

"You know, you *must* know, for it's fairly breakin' my heart I am here; I want to get back to myself, and Peggy, an' the boy."

"Ah! you have begun to think of *them* at last."

"I own I have been selfish, sinfully, wretchedly selfish, but I'm cured," replied Dan, in a tone of contrition.

"But you remember the conditions of the compact," said the other, "neither of you can regain your original form and station unless both consent."

"Oh! *wirrasthrue*, then I'll never be my own man again," sobbed Dan. "Ould Bulworthy, bad 'cess to him, has the best of the bargain, an' he'll stick to it like wax; small blame to him for it, seein' that I sould my comfort entirely for a pair of murdherin' top-boots; he ain't such an omathaun as to come back here to his gout an' his scowldin' madame, when its a thrifle of hunger is all he'll have to put up wid, over the way, an' there's happiness enough in one glance of Peggy's bright eye, to swally that up if it was ten times as throublesome; and there's the boy, too, that's like a growin' angel about the house, fillin' up every spot of it wid heavenly joy; oh! *wirra, wirra!* sure, I didn't know the luck I was in until I lost it out an' out."

"The perversity of mankind is strange," said the spirit. "Are you certain that Bulworthy is content in his present condition?"

"How the divil can he be otherwise?" replied the other, savagely.

"*You* were not, you remember."

"Because I didn't know there was a *worse*: like an ignorant fool, I thought that a scanty meal now and then was the greatest calamity in the world; be me sowl, I've had the knowledge rubbed into my bones, that too much is sometimes apt to sting a fellow afterwards more than too little."

"Perhaps the sensation of hunger may be to him as disagreeable as the sense of satiety is to you," suggested the spirit.

"Oh! if there was only a chance of that," cried Dan, brightening up at the idea. "An' be the same token, now that I think of it, he did send over for some of that vagabone soup; long life to you, you've put the hope into me heart once more; but how the mischief am I to find out the state of the ould blaggard's feelin's?"

"There's nothing like going to work in a straightforward way," said the spirit; "just put on your hat and go over and ask him."

"Faix, an' I will, an' thank you kindly, too, for puttin' it into me head," replied Dan.

"I wish you good morning, then," said the other, and even while Dan was looking at her straight in her face, she gradually resumed her vapory appearance, growing thinner and thinner, until she finally went out like a puff of tobacco.

CHAPTER VI

"Within the circle of your own estate,
Confine yourself, nor yearn for brighter fate."

And now let us return to the cobbler's cabin, and see how matters are progressing there. Peggy has just brought over the tureen of soup so fervently longed for by the changed Squire; with a cry of joy, for he is very hard set, indeed, he seized the welcome gift, and placing it between his knees as he sat on the low workstall, prepared to dive into its savory contents, but a groan of horror and disappointment broke from his lips when, on taking off the cover, he found the tureen was empty.

"The pippin-squeezing ruffian," cried he, "he's sent it over without as much as a smell, and I so mortial hungry that I could bite a tenpenny nail in two; if he was here, bad 'cess to me if I wouldn't smash this upon his head."

"That's mighty strange, entirely," said Peggy, "for I'll be on me oath there was plenty in it when I took it off the Squire's sideboard."

"If there was, you must have gobbled it up yourself, or spilt it on the street, you unconsiderate faymale," said Bulworthy.

"Is it me, indeed, Dan, jewel? it's well you know that if it was goold, an' you could ate it, I wouldn't put a tooth into it, when I knew you wanted it so dhreadful," replied Peggy, reproachfully.

"Well, may-be you wouldn't," doggedly observed Bulworthy; "but do, for Heaven's sake, get me somethin' to put an end to the wobblin' that's goin' on in the inside of me; may I never leave this place alive if I think I've had a male's vitells for a month."

"How outrageous you are, Dan," sorrowfully replied the other. "Where am I to get it?"

"Go out an' buy it, ov coorse."

"Arrah what with? I'd like to know; sure, an' won't we have to wait until that purse-proud ould rap over the way pays us the shillin' that he owes us."

A reproachful pang shot through the heart of Bulworthy at that observation. "The ould skinflint," said he, "if I ever get near him again, may-be I won't touch him up for not doin' that same."

"Indeed, an' it would sarve him right," Peggy went on. "Swimmin' in plenty as he is, it's little that he thinks of the pinchin' hunger we feel."

"Don't don't," cried Bulworthy, pressing his hands against his gastronomic regions. "I feel it now, fairly sthranglin' me; it's just as if some wild savage beast was runnin' up and down here, sarchin' for somethin' to devour, and not bein' able to find it, is takin' mouthfuls out of my intayrior by the way of a relish; oh! murdher, I never knew what hunger was before."

"Didn't you, raylly?" Peggy replied, with a queer expression. "Faith, then, it wasn't for the want of chances enough."

"I mean – don't bother – it's famished I am, and crazy a'most; is there a dhrop of dhrink in the house?"

"Not as much as would make a tear for a fly's eye," said Peg.

"No! then what the Puck are we to do?"

"Bear it, I suppose, as well as we can; we've often done it afore, an' what's worse, will have to do it agin, unless the hearts of the rich changes towards us."

"Oh! if ever I get back to myself again," muttered the hungry Squire. "Peg, darlin', go over to the old schamer, an' tell him that av he doesn't send me the shillin' I'll expose him, I know more about him than he thinks for; if he's black conthrary, you might just whisper in his lug that I'm up to his thricks when he was in the grocery line; ax him for me, who shoved the pennies into the butther, wathered the whisky, and sanded the shugar, who" —

"Why, for gracious sake, Dan, where did you pick up all that knowledgeableness?" interrupted Peggy.

"Hem! no matther – never you mind – may-be I only dhreamt it," replied Bulworthy, with some hesitation. "I don't know exactly what I was talkin' about; it's the imptyness that's speakin', so I wouldn't mention it; only go and get somethin' somewhere, av it was only a brick."

"I'll be at him again, Dan, sence you wish it; but it's little blood I'm thinking, we'll be able to squeeze out of his turnip of a heart," said Peggy, putting on her shawl and bonnet, to make the thankless attempt. As she was going out of the door, however, she saw the Squire hobbling across the street.

"Talk of the – what's his name – May I never, but here the ould reprobate comes, hoppin' gingerly over the stones, like a hen walkin' on a hot griddle. May the saints soften him all over, an' make his heart as tendher as his toes this blessed day. I'll lave you wid him, Dan, darlin', for I'm not over partial to his company. So I'll take the babby out for a blast o' fresh air while yez are convarsin'."

Peggy's preparations for her promenade were quickly made, which resulted in her leaving the place before the gouty visitor had accomplished his short but painful transit from house to house.

"A pretty thing *I've* done for myself," groaned Bulworthy, suffering alike from thirst, hunger, and cold, as he vainly strove, by slapping his hands against his chest, to make the blood circulate warmly through his finger-ends. "Ov coorse that cobblin' scoundrel will never consent to come back to his starvation and poverty – he'd be a greater fool even than I was if he did. Ah! if I ever do get back to a good dinner again, there shan't be a poor devil within a mile of me that'll ever want one while I live. Here comes the cripple; the only chance I have is to pretend that I'm in a sort of second-hand paradise here." So saying, he commenced to sing, in a voice of exaggerated jollity, a verse of

"The jug o' punch,"

accompanying the tune by vigorous whacks of his hammer upon the piece of sole-leather he was beating into the requisite toughness.

The united sounds of merriment and industry smote upon Dan's heart like a knell.

"Listen at the happy ragamuffin, working away like a whole hive o' bees, and chirpin' like a pet canary-bird," said he to himself. "Oh, it's aisy seen he won't want to renew his acquaintance wid this murdherin' gout an' the useless money – but, hit or miss, it won't do to let him see me down in the mouth."

So, putting on a careless swagger, and forcing a tone of joyousness into his voice:

"Hallo, cobbler," he cried, "there you are, bellusin' away like a bagpiper. What an iligant thing it is to see such poor wretches whistlin' themselves into an imitation of comfort."

"How do you know but I'm crammed full of real comfort, bad luck to yer mockin' tongue?" said Bulworthy, disgusted at the other's satisfied demeanor.

"It's pleased I am to see your foggy moon of a face, anyway," he went on. "Where's me shillin'?"

"Why, you poor, miserable attenuation of humanity, how dare you address yourself to me in that orthodox manner?" observed Dan, with an ambitious attempt at Bulworthy's magniloquence.

"Miserable, eh?" replied the other, with a chirp. "Is it me miserable, wid such a home as this?"

"It's all over," thought Dan, "the ould brute's as happy as a bird. Bad luck to the minute that my own pelt made a cage for him."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.