

Burkem, with his usual obsequiousness, did his utmost to make himself agreeable to every one in Mr. O'Donnell's employment, particularly to Mary Cahill. To her, he was all attention; he assisted her in her household duties, stood with the cows while milking, and did several other little offices. Though Mary did not love him, still it was something to be courted by a rising man like Ned Burkem—a man that stood so high in the estimation of both landlord and agent. Mary, like most of her sex, had a good mixture of pardonable vanity in her composition, though she did not encourage his addresses, still she did not wholly reject them. It is true, Burkem loved her, if one of his low, cunning nature could entertain such a hallowed feeling as love. There are natures that cannot understand or appreciate love in its holiest and purest sense, and yet are governed by a blind passion that drives them to desperation.

As Mary was returning from town, one evening, about nightfall, Burkem met her a few fields from the house. He crossed her path as if he were on his way to Mr. O'Donnell's, whilst in reality he was watching for her coming fully two hours.

"And is it now you're coming home, Mary. I wonder you're not lonesome."

"Not a bit, Ned. I'm sure no one would hurt a thackeen like me; besides, the neighbors aren't bad."

"That's thrue, Mary, alanna; shure no one would hurt a purty colleen like you."

"More of your blarney, Ned."

"Sorra a blarney, Mary. But go easy; I'm as tired a dog; we had such dancing at Mrs. Butler's last night, I'm not able to sthir a foot."

"Now, who were in it?"

"Oh! not many. John and James Cormack were there, and Hanna Russell. Faix, I'm thinking that James Cormack and Hanna are pulling a cord; I never saw two greater in my life; they couldn't sthir from one another at all."

Mary changed colors, for Hanna was a noted belle, and a rival of hers. Though it was dusk, yet he knew from her eager, flurried manner that his words had taken effect, so he continued—

"Mrs. Butler tould me that they have the match all settled. John Cormack is thinking of going to America to join his brother, so they'll have the house to themselves."

Mary walked on in silence.

"Don't you think it is well for them?"

"Faix, I'm sure I can't say; I suppose it is; but then it doesn't concern me," said Mary, with a sigh, rather too deep for an unconcerned person.

"No, but then people say that you had a liking for him, and that she got inside you, and people don't like to be filted in that way."

"It's hard to sthop people's mouths; but sure we must bear it," she replied.

"The way to silence them would be to take the sthirt of them; that would show people that you had no hankering for him."

"I wish them luck, Ned; but never a bit if I mean to hurry myself on their account."

"You needn't, Mary, for you can easily get as good and better, any day. To say the least of him, he was a palavering sleeveen to be trying to coax any girl, and he going to be married to another."

"Faix," said she, with a forced laugh, "I don't care that about Lim," and she snapped her fingers. "That I may never meet a greater loss."

"I know one, Mary, that loves you dearer than his own life, that dreames about you day and night, that would give his heart's blood for you, and that is double as good a match as James Cormack, and that would one day make you a lady if you'd marry him."

"And pray, who is going to make this lady of me?" said she.

He pushed near her, and placed his arm around her waist.

"It's I, Mary, I love you Mary; you know I have twenty pounds a-year; I'm promised a farm by the master; I will make you happy. Oh, Mary, say you'll be my wife! do love, and sure we'll be happy as the day's long."

She paused; the supposed faithlessness of her old lover rose up in judgment against him, yet she loved him, and a woman cannot tear the sweet pleasure of love so easily from her bosom, to make room for a new one. It is true, she often heard Burkem spoken of as a cunning, deceitful man; yet, she always found him kind and soft-spoken; besides he told her how he oftentimes interfered for the poor tenants; all this made some impression upon her.

"Well, Mary, what do you say?" said he.

"I don't know, Ned; we'll speak about it another time."

"Why not now? Will you have James Cormack laugh at you, when he marries Hanna Russell; besides, Mary, it is pleasant to have your own house and cows, and to have servants, instead of being one yourself."

"It is, indeed."

"Would you like riches, Mary?"

"Faith, I'm sure I would," said she, with a smile; "who is it that don't?"

"True, Mary, they are everything; look at Mr. Ellis; he came here a poor steward; no one knew him—look at him now, what a great man he is, stuck up with my lord in every hand's turn."

"It is a fine thing to be rich, no doubt," said Mary.

"It is, Mary, for I'll tell you, but don't tell anybody."

"Never fear."

"Well, Mr. Ellis intends turning out the tenants, and I'm promised a farm, my