

did not object at all to a large turf fire on a cold night; but the old bedstead from Cronane still occupied its old place of honour in the best position in the room, the little deal table was destitute of cloth or ornament of any kind, and the tarpaulin on the floor was not rendered more luxurious by the presence of rugs.

'Rugs indeed!' said the Squire, snorting almost like a wild beast when his wife ventured to suggest a few of these comforts. 'Is it tripping me up you'd be? Rugs indeed! I know better.'

But compared to its condition when the Squire first occupied it, the barn was now a fairly comfortable bedroom, and Squire Murphy, Squire Fitzgerald, Squire Terence Malone, and the other squires of the neighbourhood had many a good smoke there, and many a hearty laugh, as they said, quite 'unknownst' to the English lady and her grand friends. And Nora, Molly, and even Biddy Murphy often shared in these festive times, laughing at the best jokes, and adding sundry witticisms on their own account.

It was now, however, Christmas Eve, and Mrs O'Shanaghgan's nearest English relatives were coming to spend the festive season at the Castle. Mrs Hartrick, for the first time in her life, was to find herself in Old Ireland. Linda was also accompanying her mother, and Terence O'Shanaghgan was coming back for a brief visit to the home which