

THE WHITEBOY—BY MRS. S. C. HALL.

WE have hitherto known Mrs. Hall principally as the writer of sundry short amusing tales of Irish life and character, and (in conjunction with her husband) of some interesting tours through various parts of Great Britain. To the reputation thus established, she had not added much by the only "regular novel" which we believe she had hitherto published; "Marina," though well written, displaying little, in plot or character, to raise it above the ordinary level of novels. It is otherwise, however, with that now before us.

"The Whiteboy," which was published as one of Chapman and Hall's Monthly Series of Fiction, is a Story of Ireland in the year 1832, and abounds in all the humour and pathos which had marked the shorter sketches of the authoress.

Ireland was at that day, even more perhaps than at present, a country of two nations, "Irish-Irish, and English-Irish." Edward Spencer, the hero of the tale, an Englishman by birth and education, goes over to visit the Irish estates lately left him by his uncle, with the determination to ally himself, during his stay in the island, to neither party. At the very outset, however, he finds that his own bottle-green cloak, and the grass-green liveries of his servants, while they gain him the distrust of one party, give the other, in their own estimation, a sort of claim upon him, which is only shaken by his avowed sentiments of moderation. And so he finds it throughout his experience. The demon of "party" had poisoned society, and, too liberal and unprejudiced to embrace the extreme measures advocated by either, he is regarded as the enemy of both. This—the leading argument of the work—it will be seen is a very delicate one to touch upon; but it is so managed by Mrs. Hall as to avoid the slightest appearance of offence to either the Anglo-Irish, or "the mere Irish." While she hesitates not to point out the glaring faults of both, as parties, she does full justice to their individual kindness of heart and generous feeling.

The construction and development of the plot, through which this main idea is wrought out, is such as to render the story very interesting to those who read for mere amusement, whilst this interest must be vastly heightened to those who feel a concern (and what true-hearted Briton does not?) for the weal and woe of the unhappy country where the scene is laid. Ellen Mac-Donnell is such a character as a woman only can properly depict—warm-hearted, high-minded, and generous; firm and unwavering in her friendship and affection; compassionate and forgiving even to those who have most deeply wronged her; kind and benevolent to the suffering poor—and not only benevolent in action, but (what the Irish

peasant values still more) warm and sympathising in word and manner.

We would wish to have presented to our readers a specimen of the rude wit of "Doyle of the Cars," of the savage fidelity of "Mortogh of the Strong Island," or of the simple pathos of the "innocent" Mat the Schoolmaster. Our space however, will only permit us to extract the following legend, which we do, not more for the humour with which it is told, than for the excellent moral it contains.

The great grand-father of the narrator, spent with an afternoon's chase over the hills after a runaway cow, had laid him down to sleep under the shelter of an old stone on the hill side, known as the Druid's Altar. How long he slept, it appears, is not a matter of history, but when he awoke, he saw his cow—a genuine Kerry cow, by the way, famed as being the wildest in Ireland—quietly grazing beside him, and "the most beautiful little creature the sight of his eyes ever looked upon," sitting very comfortably between the horns upon her forehead.

"Haven't I tamed her?" said the little lady.

"You have, indeed, my lady," answered my grand-father's father, "and if you would not think I'd be making too bold, I'd be glad to know how you managed it all, for I'd like to try the same method on my wife, who's anything but tame. She's mother to fourteen, grand-mother to twenty-eight, and great-grandmother to five children. She'll be seventy-two years of age come next Saint Martin's, and she's just as bothersome, and talkative, and tasing to me now, as she was the day I married her, when she was not all out seventeen, and was called the Wild Rose of Muskerry."

"Is she a great bother to you?" said the lady, and her voice sounded as sweet as a lone mountain rill in hot thirsty weather.

"She is, indeed," he answered.

"But she has lived with you, and loved you, and worked for you, and brought you fine sons, and virtuous daughters?"

"She has so; but she fights sometimes to have a little of her own way; she does a deal that's pleasing to me in some things, but every now and then she wants to be what she calls 'considered.'"

"And you don't like that?"

"I do not, my lady; I like to have my own way, and not to be teased."

"And what have you done to keep her quiet?"

"Why then, I may as well tell you, for I dare say you know; whenever she puts me out with her grumbling, I give her a bating."

"And if she puts you out again?" said the little fairy.

"Why then I give her another."

"And if she still bothers you?"

"What do I do, is it, my lady?" asked my great grand-father; "why I give her another."

"And so on, I suppose," said the Jewel; and at first she laughed, but by degrees her face grew serious, and she looked at my great grand-father, very—very steadfast; "and suppose," she said, "you war to try the other way; try kindness—and justice—above all, kindness; it did well with a cow; she went on stroking the beast's ears, who moved like a wood-quest in answer; 'it did well with a cow, and I don't see why it should not do with a woman; you hunted her, I coaxed her.'"

"You're a capital maker of fairy tales," said Mr. Spencer, laughing, "and I must be more stupid even than an Englishman not to read it."

Happy will be the day for Ireland, when the "factions" which there divide society, take the good fairy's advice, and try "coaxing" instead of "bating."