

SONNETS FROM THE AFGHANESE.

NO. 1.—TO A MULE.

A weird phenomenon, O mule, art thou!
One pensive ear inclined toward the west,
The other soul-sou'-east by a little soul,
The some explicate of peace and rest.
But who can tell at what untoward hour
Thy slumbering energy will assert its function,
With fervid eloquence and awakening power,
Thy hee-haw and thy heels in wild conjunction?
Go! kick the stuffing out of Time and Space!
Assert thyself, thou Child of Destiny,
Till nature stands aghast with frightened face!
A greater marvel art thou than the wonder
Of Zeus from high Olympus launching thunder.

NO. 2.—TO A GOAT.

Thou hast a serious aspect, but methinks
Beneath the surface, Billy, I discern
A thoughtful tendency to play high-jinks,
A solemn, waiting wickedness supern.
Within the amber circles of thine eye
There lurketh mischief of exorcistic kind,—
A humor grim, mechanical, and dry,
Evasive, subdulous, and undefined.
I would I understood thee better, Billy,
Beseech thee of thy courtesy explain;
Now, doth the flavour of a poster fill
Thy utmost need? Of old hats art thou vain?
I pry thee, goat, vouchsafe some information.
Oh, say! Come, now! Get out! Oh, thunderation!

NO. 3.—TO TAFFY.

Hail, Taffy, new-born goddess! Thou art come
Into the world emollient and serene,
With liberal hands dispensing balmy gum,
A sirup-mouthed, molasses-visaged queen!
What art thou giving us, O gracious one?
Thou dost assuage our daily cares and toils.
Thine to mollify the rasping dun,
Thine to alleviate domestic broils.
The lover seeks thy aid to win his joy,
The statesman looketh toward thee and the preacher,
The interviewer, and the drummer-boy,
Who drummeth wisely, owning thee for teacher.
The clam-dispenser took thy tuneful praise,
The lightning roddest knoweth all thy ways.

—D. S. Proudfoot, Scribner.

MY LADY'S DIAMONDS.

I.

Those who are familiar with the environs of Dublin—their nooks and byways—are aware in how short a time even the pedestrian can transport himself from the stir and bustle of the City into sylvan scenery; among woodbine-scented lanes and rural spots, that might be miles away in the heart of the country. A ramble by the lonely sea-shore, on heath-clad mountain, or in quiet woodland, may be enjoyed by the dweller in the metropolis within the compass of a walk.

In the year 1862, when the circumstance about to be narrated took place, this nearness to the country was still greater than it is now, when the suburbs are extending themselves on all sides, and bricks and mortar invading the green fields and hedgerows.

A lady, whom we shall call Lady Mary V., lived at that time in a country place, situated in so isolated a position, and with such rural surroundings, that it was hard to realize the fact of its being within six miles of the Castle of Dublin. A granddaughter, the offspring of her only child, who had died in giving her birth at the age of nineteen, was her sole companion. Though not wealthy, she was in fair circumstances, and much sought after—winning a good deal in society, and attending with religious scrupulosity all court ceremonials and entertainments.

No more stately dame trod the vice-regal halls on festive occasions than Lady Mary V., as, accompanied by her pretty granddaughter, she made her way up St. Patrick's Hall to take the place on the dais to which her rank entitled her; and very graceful and dignified she looked in her sweeping velvets and old point lace, and a magnificent set of diamonds—bequeathed to her by an old Marchioness, her aunt—that often went high to eclipse those of "her Excellency" of the day, herself.

Lady Mary always made a point of returning to her country home after assisting at festivities, public or private, in town. She disliked the trouble as well as expense of sleeping at an hotel; and on winter nights she and her granddaughter—well muffled in furs and wraps—would ensconce themselves, each in her snug corner of the brougham; beguiling the way by talking over the party. Or else, while the elder lady calmly dozed, her young companion would give herself up to the dreams and air-built fabrics common to those before whom lies the garden of life to be laid out at their sweet will.

II.

Shift we now the scene to an humble dwelling in a back street in Dublin, occupied by a young tradesman, his wife and child.

The room is clean and comfortable; hearth swept up, tea things set out on a little table, the kettle singing on the hob, a nice griddle-cake browning before the bright fire. The man is seated, idle, before it, though it is four o'clock in the afternoon; his legs stretched out, a short pipe in his mouth, at which he takes an occasional pull while he stares moodily at the blaze. His wife glances anxiously at him from time to time and sighs.

Surely never was man so changed as Jim Ryan! So brisk and cheery as he was, working late and early at his trade, regular and industrious; and so loving and tender to herself and the boy. And now something had come over him—poor Susan could not tell what. He was

gloomy and morose; neglected his business, and was often away, at times for whole nights together. There was never any sign of drink upon him, and neither at the Emerald Isle, the Lifeboat, nor any other "public" was he to be seen. That she had ascertained. It was most unaccountable.

The regular earnings, so punctually brought home, had ceased. Some weeks they were short enough of money; and then again there was much more than sufficed. And once when Jim came in and threw down such a lot into her lap that she cried out in surprise to know where on earth it had all come from, he turned round angry upon her, and bade her in a surly voice to "ax no questions, but spend it."

Susan's perplexed and anxious thoughts were interrupted now by her little boy, who, for some minutes past, had been standing at the house-door watching. He was a delicate looking little fellow, of about ten years old, pale from the effects of an accident, and walking lame with a crutch.

"Mother," he said fretfully, "I don't think Aunt Nelly is coming at all. Sight or light of her I can't get all the whole length of the street; an' I'm watching till my eyes are sore. She'll not come at all, an' the lovely cake will be ruined."

"No, the lovely cake won't be ruined; and she will come, you onpatient little mite!" said his mother, kissing the small thin face. "There, sit ye down by the fire, my heart, and rest the poor leg. I'm going to wet the tea, and you'll see she'll be here before 'tis drawn. What would hinder her from coming? My lady has given her the day out" (Nelly was Lady Mary V.'s kitchen-maid); "but in course she has heaps to do, shopping about the town, and diverting herself. And, sure enough, here she comes!" as a rosy-cheeked girl bounced into the room.

"How are ye all! and how's every bit of you, Suzy darling?" cried Nelly, throwing her arms round her sister, and hugging her over and over again, with the impulsiveness of her class and country. "And little Micky—I declare he's looking elegant since he came out of the hospital—he'll soon be as well as ever. The ladies will be asking—they're cruel fond of him! Here, Micky, is a parcel of lovely things Miss Edith sent you; and if you'll grope your hand in my pocket, maybe you'll find something I brought you myself, young man."

Nelly chattered on, displaying her various purchases and telling her adventures of the day, while Susan poured out tea and cut the griddle-cake. Ryan took no part in the merry talk or meal; he remained still glowering moodily over the fire.

"And now won't you tell us about the ladies?" said Susan. "Are they going out a great deal these times?"

"Ay indeed, that are they," said Nelly; "it's the 'saison' you know, nothing but balls and parties. Last month was the drawing-room at the Castle, and, O Susan dear, I'd give the wide world you could have seen them dressed. Mrs. Parks is very good-natured; and that's more than can be said of all lady's maids, from what I hear tell. She came down to the servants' hall, after she'd done dressing the ladies, and told cook and me and the rest of us we might go up and look at them before their cloaks was put on. And O, but it was a sight! The trains, yards and yards long, sweeping the ground! And the feathers and the flowers and the jewellery! My lady's diamonds blazing like anything! The flash of them, when she'd turn her head sudden, you'd think would blind you. Splendid they are!"

"And very valuable too?" said Susan.
"Valuable! you may say that. They're worth thousands! Mrs. Parks says that a single one of them—ay, even one of the earrings—would make the fortunes of the likes of us. If we had the price of them diamonds, we might live in plenty and comfort, and never soil a hand or do a turn of work for the rest of our days."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Susan.
"Yes, indeed. And isn't it quare now to think of carrying all that money's worth about one? I wonder my lady isn't afraid of travelling night after night along that lonesome road with them valuable jewels upon her, and no protection. If it was me I'd be thinking every whole minute I was going to be robbed and murdered."

"But," said Ryan, who had roused up, and laying aside his pipe now entered with interest into the conversation, "she has her coachman, sure."

"Is it Peter," exclaimed Nelly, bursting into a ringing laugh,—"ould Pether! O, 'tis he'd be the fine protector! Why, if you were to see him swathed up to go out at night, and scarce able to stir hand or foot, for all the world like an old mummy in a picter-book, you'd die laughing. My lady is that careful of him, and that afraid of his taking cold, she's always buying him wraps and rugs and shawls and comforters; and he thatches himself with them all, putting one on top of the other till you only see the end of his old nose peeping out. One time that I got leave to go into town for the night and sat up beside him on the coach-box, the horse picked up a stone. Well, to see him unrolling himself, and peeling off rug after rug to free first one leg and then the other, would wear the patience of a saint. 'Arrah, man alive,' sez I, 'hand us over the picker and I'll hop down and have it out, and be back again in half a clap.' 'You!' sez he, facing round on me as if 'twas a young elephant was sitting beside him, 'you! A' what do you, a faymale, know about

horses?' Ould Peter thinks no one knows any mortal thing but himself. He's one that fancies he understands everybody's business better than they do themselves."

"O, I know," said Ryan. "Sort of man he is, that would go for to teach a rat how to make a hole."

"Exactly. But he's a decent old fellow for all that; my lady thinks no end of him. She wouldn't keep him, nor the horse, waiting in the street at night one minute. They'll be ordered at a certain time, and she'll look at her watch, and when the time comes, home they'll have to start. Mrs. Parks says she do think if it was the Lord Liffenant himself Miss Edith was dancing with she'd have to come away straight and leave the ball, sooner than keep Peter waiting below. At di-entically the same hour every night. Yis, di-entically," repeated Nelly, proud (though with a slight misgiving) at having laid hold of an imposing word, and resolved to make the most of it. "If there was people living beside the road,—only there aren't—they could tell what o'clock it was precisely, when they'd hear my lady's carriage wheels, she's that exact and punctual."

"And what time is it ordered?" asked Ryan.

"A quarter past two; reg'lar as the clock."

"And she always wears them diamonds?"

"O laws, no! only on grand occasions—the drawing-rooms and state balls and the like."

"An' when will the next state ball be?"

"O, myself doesn't know for certain. Mrs. Parks could tell; it's her business, you know. St. Patrick's night there'll be a tremendous flare-up, an' the ladies will—"

"Pshaw! Nelly, never mind the ladies and their dresses," broke in Susan; uneasy, she scarcely knew why, at her husband's changed manner, and the sort of greedy excitement with which he listened to the girl, "what does men folks care about clothes and jewellery? Can't you tell us about something else; the new garden, or the horses, or—"

"Speak for yourself, woman!" cried Jim, flinging himself round on his chair and glaring angrily at her. "Just hold your prate, and don't go answering for other people's likings. Go on, Nelly, about the ladies. Does the young one wear valuable jewels too, like my lady?"

"She does not," answered Nelly, "only flowers and simple things. And very quare it is, as cook and I were saying. But Mrs. Parks snapped vicious at us; and sez she, bridling up, 'Youth and beauty requires no ornaments,' Daisies Miss Edith had at the last drawing-room, and snow-drops she's to—"

But Ryan apparently took no interest in either youth and beauty or daisies and snow-drops.

"Where," he interrupted, "does my lady wear those diamonds?"

"Well, I'll tell you that," said Nelly, greatly pleased at the interest her gossip was arousing. "There's her head-dress, the valuablest are in front of it—a tiara 'tis called—and stars all round the head and behind. And the stars themselves in the heavens don't shine brighter. And then a lovely necklace and brooch and earrings. O, it'll be a sight to see, St. Patrick's night, when they're dressed for the ball. Cook and me and the rest of us will be allowed up as sure as sure; and I wish you were there too, Susan. No more tea, darlin', thank you kindly, I must be going now."

And with hugs and kisses, and many parting words, Nelly went off.

III.

A few days after her sister's visit Susan Ryan received a message from a friend in Sandymount begging her to come and spend the night with her there. The girl's mother was in a dying state, and the person who had hitherto shared her watch having been suddenly called away, she would be left alone with the dying woman if Susan did not come to her. Susan could not resist her friend's appeal, albeit very unwilling to leave poor Micky; for, thought she, with a sigh, "it's as likely as not his father won't be at home."

Micky slept in a little crib at the foot of his parents' bed. There was in the outer room, where the family lived and took their meals, a box bevstead, such as is often seen in country cottages, which "contrived a double debt to pay," made a seat when the lid was shut down. It stood in a snug corner near the fireplace, screened off by a bit of low partition, so that it could not be seen by those in the room.

"Now, do you know what I'll do, Micky honey?" said his mother, seeing the shade that came over the poor little face when he heard she was going out. "I'll make up the box-bed for you to sleep in, and the place will be as light as day with the elegant fire that'll be in it and will keep you company. So now, darlin', don't be frettin' or lonesome; I'll be back before you're time to miss me."

"The box-bed! O mother, that will be grand!" And Micky, in the eager delight of a child at anything new, forgot his trouble at being left by himself.

For some time after his mother had gone he lay awake, watching from his cosy nest behind the partition the reflections of the firelight flickering and dancing on the opposite wall. But soon even the charming novelty of the box-bed failed to keep him wakeful. Gradually the shadows grew fainter, and Micky fell fast asleep.

He woke with a violent start; and in a fright that seemed to take away his breath. There

were voices in the room. Men were talking and smoking—he could smell the tobacco—and the fire had been stirred into a blaze and candles lit.

"I think, boys, we've settled it all now," said a voice; "and surely there never was a job come so neat to our hands. As I said before, three of us is enough to be in it; and enough is as good as a feast."

"Right you are, Joe, and we understand well. One to seize the horse and deal with the old coachman, another to tackle the ladies, and the third to secure the diamonds as they're stripped off."

"No violence, boys, mind that!" Micky recognized his father's voice. "Remember my bargain with you. D'ye hear, Joe; there must be no violence."

"O lord, no!" said the man addressed as Joe; "by no means, not at all! Pelite will be no word for us; butter wouldn't melt in our mouths. 'You'll excuse us, my lady, for taking the liberty and making so bold as to trouble yer ladyship's honour; but, if it's plazing to you to be so kind as to hand us out the thrille of diamonds you have about you, we'll be obliged. Axing your pardin' for the intrusion—"

This speech, delivered in mincing tones, provoked a roar of coarse laughter.

"They'll screech, to be sure," continued the man, ceasing his mockery, and resuming the brutal manner that was natural to him, "fay-males always do; but I've got some purty toys in my pocket will soon stop their noise. Don't be afraid, Jim Ryan, it isn't pistols or guns, nor neither swords or blunderbusses."

"Whisht!" cried one of the party under his breath; "what was that? I thought I heard something. Are you sure there's no one hearkening?"

"Sorra a one is there to hearken," said Ryan. "The wife's away in Sandymount till morning, and the child fast asleep in there," pointing to the inner room.

"That ditch at the three-mile stone will be the very place to lie in wait in; and by all accounts we won't be kep' long cooling our heels, as they're so punctual and reg'lar."

"And we'll be punctual and reg'lar too," said Joe, who was evidently the leader of the party. "And mind, boys, no Patrick's pot that day for any of us! We'll drown our shamrogue another time, and drink th' old lady's health and Jim Ryan's. It's the grandest haul that ever came in anyone's luck. More power to the boy that put us up to it!"

(To be continued.)

HEARTH AND HOME.

TASTE IS EVERYTHING.—Dress is largely regulated by taste. One person always appears well-dressed; another never; yet the one who is ill-dressed may pay his tailor twice as much in a year as the other. So it is with the dress of women. One who does not understand the adaptation of style and colours may be loaded with costly garments and finery, and yet never appear well-dressed. To some persons, taste in everything seems natural; but in all it admits of cultivation. And the cultivation of one's taste not only saves money, but it is a source of much satisfaction and happiness.

A DIFFICULT CHURCH.—The faculty of one of our largest theological seminaries received some time since a letter, in which the inhabitants of a small town in Kansas applied to them for a young clergyman to take charge of their spiritual education. The long and formidable array of qualifications which the minister must possess, and the extremely meagre salary attached to the position, threw the good doctors of the faculty into something akin to despair. After much thought, one suggested that the reply should run thus:—"The only man of whom we know who could satisfy you is our revered college president, now dead some few years, and who, having accustomed himself to heavenly food (air), could perhaps eke out a bare subsistence upon the salary which you propose." This, after due deliberation, was rejected, and the next proposal listened to:—"We know of no one, excepting the Apostle Paul, who approaches to your standard of piety; he might preach of a Sunday, and get his living by sail-making on week-days." This was at length also rejected, and the following finally hit upon and dispatched:—"We know of no man upon earth good enough for you, or who could possibly live on the salary you mention. We therefore advise you to make an effort to secure the angel Gabriel, who could board in heaven, and come down Sundays to preach."

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