

THE
BRITISH COLONIAL MAGAZINE.

Conducted by W. H. SMITH, Author of the "Canadian Gazetteer," &c. &c.

NUMBER III.

PRICE 3d.; or 12s. 6d. per Annum.

REDDY RYLAND;

SHOWING HOW "THE SHINE" WAS TAKEN OUT OF HIM.

LAUGHING, loving, rollicking, rousing, fighting, tearing, dancing, singing, good-natured Reddy! of all the kind-hearted, light-hearted, gay-hearted fellows that ever whirled a shillala at a fight (*when he could not help it*, for Reddy declared that otherwise he never fought), or *covered the buckle** at a fair, Reddy Ryland was the king! His very face was a jest-book. His eyes, though wild and blue, were not as mischievous as mirthful; his full, flexible mouth was surrounded by folds and dimples, where wit and humour rested at all times and all seasons. His hat sat in a most knowing manner upon the full rich curls of his brown hair; his gay-coloured silk neckerchief was tied so loosely round his throat, that if it were possible he had ever seen a picture of Byron, folk would have said he was imitating the lordly poet; his figure was that of a lithe and graceful mountaineer—his voice the very echo of mirth and joy; and his name for ten miles round his mother's dwelling (Reddy was resolved it should not be considered *his* until after her death) was sure to excite a smile or a blessing, perhaps both. With all this, Reddy was careful of the main chance—a good farmer in a small way, and a prosperous one; read Martin Doyle and Captain Blackyer; understood green crops, and stall-fed his cow; had really brewed his own beer twice, and it only turned sour *once*; talked of joining the Temperance Society—though I need not add, that if Reddy had been fond of "the drop," he would not have been the prosperous fellow he was. Here, then, was an Irish peasant free from the

*A favourite Irish step (not known in quadrilles).

common faults of his countrymen; he seldom procrastinated; was sober, honest, truthful, diligent, and, to use the phrase which his mother applied to him at least ten times a-day, "was as good a son as ever raised his head beneath the canopy of heaven." What, then, can I have to say about Reddy Ryland, more than to give honour due to his good qualities? If this be all, my task is nearly done; for the language of praise, I am told, is used sparingly by the prudent; people in an ordinary way tire amazingly over the record of their neighbour's virtues. It is very delightful to feel their good effects—to enjoy the advantages arising therefrom; but we do not like to hear them lauded what we call too highly; it is a sort of implied censure on our own imperfections, that we do not relish; consequently, we are by many degrees too anxious to pick out faults, and thrust our tongues therein, as children do their fingers into small rents, to make them larger. The rent, the faulty spot in Reddy's character, was unfortunately large enough for all the tongues in the country to wag through: and let no one suppose that his popularity prevented many a bitter animadversion upon his imperfection; his particular friends never praised him without exclaiming, "Ah, thin, sure he *is* a darlint; sorra a one like him in the country; and sure it's an angel he'd be *all out*, but *for that fault he has*." It certainly is marvellous how our intimates discover and publish our faults, oiling their observations with "what a pity!" Reddy's fault was, in a word, a superabundance of conceit—real *personal* vanity. When he was a little boy, he used to dress his hair in every tub of water that came in his way; and when he grew up "a slip of a boy," his first pocket-money purchased—a looking-glass.