

The large kitchen table was drawn near the glowing fire, and the punch was circulated freely among the elder members, whilst the younger collected closer around the fire, watching the burning of the nuts that were to decide the issue of their love adventures. Frank sat on a small form, with Alice beside him, her hands resting upon his knee, both watching the progress of two nuts which were to represent themselves. There were a good many jokes and witticisms passed on them.

"They are burning smoothly enough," said one.

"Not more than they ought."

This allusion to their love, made Alice and Frank blush.

"I'll knock them down, if you don't hold your tongue," said Alice.

"Oh! you'd like it, Miss Alice," said one, "see how nicely they are kissing."

At length the small nut, which represented Alice, fluttered about, and flew off.

There was a general laugh and titter at this; some said, "she left him there;" others "they knew she'd do it."

"Faith, it was pleasant; ha! I knew you'd do it, ma Colleen Bawn!" said Shemus-a-Clough, rubbing his hands with delight; "that's the way the Fawn jumped over the ditch."

Frank was more than consoled for all this bantering by a soft whisper from Alice, saying:—

"Don't mind them, Frank; sure I couldn't help it; you know I wouldn't do it."

Frank squeezed her hand upon his breast.

Alice looked into his face, with all the love and milk of human kindness she possessed sparkling in her clear blue eyes.

And that look thrilled through Frank's heart, and spoke volumes of love.

The party at the table were getting very noisy. The Rover was fast beating the Sikhs at Chillinwallagh, and Uncle Corny in as hot pursuit of the French at Waterloo.

"War is a glorious profession," said Uncle Corny, warming to the subject; "if you were to see how we chased the French."

"Or the Sikhs at Chillinwallagh," cried the Rover.

"It is a curse," said Mr. Maher.

"How we formed into columns and lines, and charged," said Uncle Corny, not heeding the interruption.

"How we dashed into the streets, and—"

"How we moved down the cuirassiers, although they were covered with steel;" inter-

rupted Uncle Corny. "They came on us, the horses neighing and prancing, the bright steel glistening. 'On your knees,' shouted our general—present—fire.' They dashed at us, but we met them with fixed bayonets; the wounded horses turned and fled, throwing the lines into disorder."

As Uncle Corny was giving this glowing description of the battle, he had mechanically taken up the very attitude, and converted a long pole into a musket. On the other hand, the Rover, all excited, was charging across the table with a sweeping-brush, to the no small danger of bottles and glasses.

"That was as hot work as our own," said the Rover, shouldering his brush.

"Ay you may say that," said Uncle Corny, grounding his pole.

"Many's the poor man it sent unprepared before his God; many's the widow and orphan it left in want; many's the broken-heart it has caused," said Mr. Maher.

"We couldn't help that," said the Rover.

"We should do our duty," said Uncle Corny; "besides it is a glorious thing to be praised."

"As for the praise," said Mr. Maher, "little of it falls to the soldier's lot; his name may appear, with a thousand others, in the *Gazette*, but then that's all that's thought about him; and as to his gains, he has a good chance, if, after getting a broken constitution and a shattered body, he gets a few pence a day pension. Look at our friend here, after endangering his life, he was dismissed with a trifle, and is forced to go about for a living; what's glory, what's honor to him? I want to know would they take the hunger off him? wouldn't a snug cabin and a little garden be better for him?"

"It's true," said the Rover.

"He should get a pension, and he must," said Uncle Corny, with emphasis.

CHAPTER V

A COUNTRY CHAPEL—A CONFESSION OF LOVE.

"First love! thou Eden of the youthful heart!
Of all earth's joys, the only priceless part."

The little chapel of Clerihan was falling fast into decay. Father O'Donnell was feeding himself with the pious thought of building a new one; still, he calculated the expense, and when he found that it would press so heavily on his parishioners, he relinquished his darling scheme. The chapel was pretty spacious, as it had, in addition to the long house, two side ones, all which had galleries. The roof was