HERSELF AND HIMSELF.

He sat down under the shade of the veranda, and taking off his soft felt hat wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand, and then ran his fingers vigorously through his gray hair, combing it against the grain. His face told you many things, amongst others the following, that he was over fifty years of age, that he was one of the Irish race, that there was grit in him, that he was hurried and in a bad humor; that something of an unpleasant and exasperating nature was crossing his mind, causing him to frown and scowl in a way that was not at all encouraging. While one of the darkest frowns was on his brow, a figure came into the open door of the dining room, in front of which he was sitting. A solid, matronly figure it was, of a woman still lingering in the autumn of middle age, but with many a silver streak in her thick, brown hair. There were lines across the white brow and a look of pain in the kindly hazel eyes, and on the sweet, though homely face lay the shadow of sorrow. She carried a towel which she handed to the perspiring male at whom she looked wistfully, asking in an emotionless matter of fact way;

"Will I got you a drink or water or will you wait for the tea?"

"I'll have the water now if you put a drop of something in it," he said after a pause, mopping his head and face with the towel and without turning to look at her. She recentered the house and soon returned with the drink. She handed it to him in silence. In silence he finished it and gave her back the empty tumbler. Without a word she received it from him, but instead of going away she crossed her arms over the ample area of her apron and remained standing almost beside him. There she remained for full two minutes, neither of them speaking. Herself and Himself, man and wife, the partners of more than half a lifetime, sharers in the weal or woe which had come to them, sharers now, to all appearances, in a common misfortune.

"Were you far?" asked Herself at length.

Himself frowned a dark and sullen frown and mumbled something about having been "far enough." It was not polite, but Herself did not show any sign of resentment. She meekly and silently turned away and went indoors.

Himself remained sitting under the veranda evidently a prey to unhappy meditations. Through the rifts in the leafy screen of the aromas and eucalyptus groves, he could see broad stretches of the level camp beyond. Through the long vistas of the peach orchard behind him the camp breezes came in from the South and fanned him. In the branches of the tall poplars near by, the doves were cooing the soft, low, flute-like coos which always seem to be a prelude to some sweet dirge for a love that is lost. There was no other intrusion on the silence. Quiet, warm summer quiet, lay all around. The distant corrals, the large galpones, the wing of buildings where the men ate and slept, all were steeped in sun-glare and silence. The dogs slept peacefully under the veranda; the fowls lay dozing in their cool nests of clay under the peach trees, the stately chief of the turkey family was off duty and lay dreamily on his side among his people, solemnly holding his tongue, and, for the moment troubling no one but himself with the conception of his individual importance. It was a scene good to look at. It spoke of comfort, order, industry, thrift and prosperity. But Himself, as he contemplated it, showed no sign of appreciation, although he was the lord of all he surveyed; it was all of his own making. He it was who had built every wall, planted every tree, laid down every corral; not a brick, or leaf, or strand of wire, or grain of wood about that magnificent homestead but represented a drop of his sweat or a thought of his busy brain, or a pulsation of his toughened heart. He had found it years ago—a gently sloping swell of the bosom of the Pampas—treeless, houseless, bare of all save the grasses; and now, after all the years, amid all the fruits of his endeavor, he sat there brooding in sullen anger.

At length turning his head an inch or two towards the open door, but keeping his eyes on the towel, he asked;

"Are you there?"

"I am," came back the answer from Herself in even, quiet tones as she came forth from the house. Himself now put his elbows on his knees and looking away into the distance he said;

"I'm goin' to put a stop to this nonsense once for all. I'll fix them scamps before they know where they are. They think they can defy me, because the law of the land, bad luck to it, gives them a right to squander a certain share of what we made by the sweat of our brows, you and me, but I'll go to a country where the law lets a man do what he likes with his own."

He paused, but Herself said nothing, although the pensive melancholy of her face grew visibly more intense.

"Yes," went on Himself presently, "you and me—we worked and slaved and struggled. From your marriage day until Tommy was sent to school you and me never knew a day's idleness. I seen you many a time with one of them at your skirts draggin' out of you, and another of 'em in your arms, while you were gettin' the meals. I seen you staying up three nights at a time to make coffee for me and the men I had with me roundin' in wet weather. We slaved, year in, year out, to get the price of a bit of land together, and if we prospered we deserved it."

"God was very good to us," said Herself. "We thought more about His goodness them times than we did after. Maybe that's the reason—"

"No, it isn't," broke in Himself, glaring round at her. "You're comin' over what the priest hinted at the other day. Don't be a parrot, woman. I think myself just as good a man now that I own four leagues of land as I did when I only owned half a league. It's the divilment that is in the country borne that's changed things, and not us that's changed."

"God knows!" said Herself sighing.

"I know!" insisted Himself. "Dang well I know where the trouble is. It's the curse that's on the country and everything born in it is cursed. We'll leave it. I'm not goin' to stay here to see the sons we reared, and that we stayed up nights and nights to mind in sickness, and that we held in our arms and hushed to sleep, and that lay against us in love—I'm not goin' to wait to be bullied by them and brought to lay by the scamps that have turned on me now like over fed dogs. I'll sell out and go home, and let them bully me if they dare. I'll give them a come-up before they feel."

Herself only sighed, and supporting her chin with her right hand looked sorrowfully at the ground.

"I'm not goin' to stand it any longer," continued Himself doggedly, looking at his toes and harping back to the same idea. "I'll sell out and go away. I'll talk to them—to them all, for there's little to pick or choose among them. (There's the sons we reared goin' to the dogs. The three girls married to please themselves and you more than me. I told you so at the time. 'Give in to them' now, says I, 'and they'll walk on you bye and bye.' And they're trying to do it."

"Indeed they're not" remonstrated Herself. "They have their own share of trouble, have the girls, one and all of them, without makin' it for us."

"Then why are they takin' sides with the boys against me?"

"They're not sidin' with the boys—what can they do, if the boys go to them?—sure they can't turn them out?" said Herself with a break in her voice and tearless agony twitching her strong brave face.

"That's right," growled Himself, "stand up for them. They'll stand up for you, will they? A nice way they're doin' it. Here we are in our old days with an empty house—without one of them we reared to stay in it and do their duty. Tell me, how long ago is it since Tom was here last?"

"He left last Tuesday, was five weeks," said Herself covering her face with her hands and leaning against one of the pillars of the veranda.

"He did, and ever since he's been spongin' from Bridget's to Mary's and from Mary's to Ellen's. James left here two days ago because I called him a lazy-good-for nothin,' to be lyin' in bed at 8 o'clock in the mornin' and—and never a foot he'll put across that door again while I own it!" said Himself raising his voice and stamping his foot.

Herself shivered and moaned as she leaned against the pillar, her head turned away from him.

"I know where he was more or less" went on Himself, the hot anger which stormed in his heart showing itself in every line of his stern face and ringing in every tone of his voice. "I knew where to find him and I followed him to-day after breakfast. 'It's the first time he done this,' I said to myself, and I'll not have it happen again. In a month or two more Franky will be comin' home from school and he'll be led astray with bad example, unless I regulate, right off the reel, with this brat—"

"Oh, Jim, Jim," pleaded Herself, "don't call the boy out of his name, don't I can't bear it."

"Can't you! Well you'll have to bear worse than that. Wait a minute until you hear about your promisin' pet. I found him where I looked for him, down at Dunlen's puesto playing cards with a crew of blackguards from the pulperia. I told him to get up at once and come home with me and he refused. He said a word to me, the hound! that he'll 'remember to his dyin' day.'"

"Oh my boy! my boy!" sobbed Herself, the big tears coming through her fingers. "Oh Mary Mother, strengthen us!"

"Aye and ask her pardon for rearin' such a renegade. But I didn't let it go with him. No man livin' will put shame upon me before others and get off scot free. The sneakin', cat-faced coward! did he think he could tell me to go be hanged and let him, alone—*his* very words—did he think I was goin' to stand that from him before his bucktoe and other blackguard companions? If he did, he made a big mistake. I just stepped across the floor of the ranch and measured him with my whip handle—once, twice, left and right, a slash over each impudent eye—"

"Oh Jim—Jim—I'm dyin'" gasped Herself, as she threw her arms about her husband's neck and fell senseless, on his knees. She would have fallen like a log at his feet on the hard tiles, were it not that his strong embrace held her. He was dumbfounded—utterly stupefied—for the moment, and it was only by instinct he held her. The shock drove the anger out of his heart and when it beat again it was with mingled throbs of love and fear and despair. Himself had never suspected, because he had been too passionate to notice it, that his words were wounding her to the very soul. And now, gazing on her still face, he thought she was dead. Herself had never fainted before and that was why Himself believed the worst. He did not with all his knowledge of Herself realize the patient, silent, uncomplaining heroism which she had shown in suffering heartache from day to day and trying to conceal it to the very last. So Himself could not see the collapse in another light than that of death. Dead! Limp, and white, and dead! Herself dead! Herself lying there in his arms, but at the same time, gone away from him! gone away while he was cursing the children she had born him—gone without a word of farewell, leaving him all alone to go through the rest of his life without her! It was a horrible thought, and Himself cried out hoarsely in terror and pain as it stabbed at his stubborn breast. His cries brought assistance. Soon there was a dozen people about him. They woke him from his stupor and persuaded him to let them carry Herself inside. The only woman folk there were Magdalena, the cook her daughter and the wife of the cart-man, but they knew what to do, and by administering a few simple restoratives they brought Herself back to life.

When she opened her eyes, Himself was standing over her and called to her by name and caught her right hand in both his own. But she knew him not, and the words she spoke were these

"Are the children all asleep? Cover them up snug for the night is cold. It's freezin'."

"Bridget, Bridget, don't you know me?" said Himself stooping over her and speaking in a frightened half-whisper. "It's me, Bridget. Don't you know who's in it?"

"Whisht!" she said "is that little Jamsey that's awake? I think I hear him crvin'. It is him the poor little thing! He must be sick," and she tried to lay by the scamps that have turned on me now like over fed dogs. I'll sell out and go home, and let them bully me if they dare. I'll give them a come-up before they feel."

Himself stared against at the faces of those about him in the mute instinctive appeal for aid or hope which a stricken spirit makes in its despair. Owney, the galpon man and estancia butcher, who was in the room by right of his twenty years' connection with the family, tip-toed in his ponderous and blood-stained top boots across the room to a corner and imperiously beckoned to Himself to come to him. Owney had known Himself at home in Ireland as boy and man, had been a neighbor of his when Himself first went to herd sheep in the old pioneer days of the West, and had been more or less in touch with him ever since. Owney could have been rich also if he had the knack of getting on. As it was, however, he was poor only a peon, one of those who had lost the race and remained behind—no matter why. But poor and shaggy though he was, with the odor of half-dried cowhides and sheep skins heavy upon him, he understood many things, for his heart was in the right place.

"I'd send for the boys and girls if I was you," said Owney when Himself came in whispering range. "That's what will bring her to. Her heart is stuck in thim childhre, an' the sight of 'em will do her good. I think I'll go an' give 'em word."

Himself said nothing. He was thinking of the two whip-cuts which he had given Herself's favorite son two hours previously, and also of how he had forbidden the youth ever to set foot in the house again. But it was on that very son's name Herself had called just now. Himself was an obstinate, self-willed man but what could he do?

"I'll be off thim!" said Owney, tiptoeing thunderously towards the door.

Himself nodded.

"An' I'll tell some of them out here," said Owney, jerking his thumb towards the galpon, "to go for the priest an' docthor. There isn't much danger, with the help of God, but she might like to see thim."

"Yes, Owney," said Himself, eagerly, "an' don't lose a second. Tell the priest to come as soon as he can—send the coach for him" and he gave Owney a shower of orders for the people outside. Then he went back and knelt at his wife's bedside.

"Huh! you're tame enough now, so y'are, me lad!" said Owney, as he galloped on his errand. "You bullied and half-mugged your childhre until you broke that woman's heart. That's what's ails with Herself. She's heart-broke. All the girls are married and the boys runnin' wild over the country because you won't give them fair play. Dang it, can't you make some allowance for them bein' a bit wild? Won't you wild yourself? Deed an' you were. You sowed your wild oats, me boy, as well as another. An' now when your own sons wants to have a little liberty you're down on thim, an' chawin' and proddin' at thim night an' mornin'. While Herself lad any of the girls left she could bear up agin it purty well. But after Mary gettin' married you could see the change. She had no one to console with thim. When the girls go away from a mother she's bet—she falls to pieces outright, so she does, especially if she meets the trouble that Herself had for the last year an' a half." And Owney flogged his horse to half speed on his way to find "the boys and girls."

There was a family reunion around Herself's bed late that night, and for days and days afterwards, for Herself was very bad indeed. Three days and nights she hovered between life and death. During that time she would start every now and then from a troubled slumber and say that she heard little Jamsey crying; and every time this happened, a tall, broad-shouldered young man would bend towards her and put his arm around her neck and lay his cheek against hers and whisper, "I'm all right, mother, don't be troubling yourself about me."

The voice invariably soothed her, for this grown-up athlete was the baby of her evil dreams. And under the rich brown locks which fell over his white forehead were two red welts—the marks of his father's anger. Himself was there, too, red eyed, haggard, silent. He came and went from the sick room, his hands behind his back, his head bent, avoiding as much as possible all speech or intercourse with everybody.

"He's dang well ashamed of himself," said Owney to his blac kplpo up in the galpon. "That's what's amiss with him. His pride is 'umbled now, an' he knows it. Only he won't give in. He knows that it's all his doin's, or mostly all, an' that's pulling the heart strings out of him if he'd only acknowledge it. I know him. He's the very spit out of his Uncle Larry—the proudest cold peacock that ever stepped an' as obstinet as a pig—although not a bad sort of man at bottom; but God help thim man if Herself goes. If anything happens to her it's all up with him."

Just then under the veranda, on the very spot where Herself had fallen were assembled three men. Himself was confronting the priest and doctor and hearing the good news that Herself was weathering the storm. It was the priest's opinion that Himself asked first.

"What do you say, Father? Tell me the whole of it. We're old friends. We've known one another for thirty year, an more is there any chance?"

"With the help of God," said the priest solemnly "there is hope and great hope for her now."

The doctor confirmed the good news. He said that when Herself next woke she would be conscious. The doctor was asked by Himself for the third or fourth time since Herself was stricken down if he could tell what the trouble was. The doctor could not do so. He spoke of nervous prostration, a run-down system, a possible shock, etc., etc., etc. The explanation left Himself—as it found him—with his own thoughts on the subject. On one point however he was definite and positive Herself, on recovering consciousness, must be most carefully tended, everything must be made pleasant for her, the slightest anxiety of shock or annoyance might be fatal, and then science got into its four-horse coach and was driven away.

"She won't wake for two hours yet," said the priest to Himself. "Will you walk down under the trees with me where we can be all alone? I have a few words to say to you."

Together the two men went out under the eucalyptus. Together they walked up and down while the time slipped by

Owney, going back from the house to his galpon after hearing the good news saw the two figures walking to and fro under the trees and drew his own conclusions.

"I'll bet mo life" said honest Owney, communing with his inner consciousness "I'll bot anything you plaze that his Reverance is walkin' into him—an' more power to him! Sobar' him well, Father. He wants it. Lave him as limp as a dish rag. It's time, so it is, to tell that man what's what!"

And it is exactly what his Reverence was doing, however Owney came to surmise it, being only a man in the galpon and a neer-do-well.

"Don't tell me," the priest was saying, "that it was all your children's fault. Where is the use of saying that when your conscience tells you another story? Look! Be honest with yourself, man alive. You won't regret it! The fault that a man acknowledges to himself is half cured. You never gave your boys a chance to be men. Why don't you let them marry? Why don't you give them a way of living? They're not children any longer. Treat them as men and not as curs. Trust them. Give them some thing to do. Show them that you want to regard them as confidential friends and not as servants to your whim. Look here! You and many men like you, with the very best of intentions, are ruining the youth of the community. You never give them a chance. You are eternally nagging at them, telling them that they're nothing, that they're no good—not Irish, not decent, not worth a straw. I tell you that's wrong. If you cow people and tell them that they're no good and that they can never be any good, they won't try to be anything. And besides, half the young fellows growing up would be just as good as the old people, and maybe better than some of them, and just as Irish spirited, and maybe more so, if they were shown fair play. But no. You must hold on to the last and show authority, and uphold what is a mistaken notion of dignity. You don't correct the child when he's small, and then when he grows up you want to enslave him! What can you expect? If the children were the offspring of cowards and slaves and mean weaklings I would expect them to bow down and be like dogs; but as they are the children of warm-blooded, brave, honest men and women I can only expect them to rebel against injustice."

And for an hour and more this torrent went on. Himself listened to it meekly. It was good for him and he knew it.

"Come now," said the priest at length, taking him by the arm, be a new man by the time she wakes. Go back and tell her that you'll meet the boys half-way. The boys themselves will come more than half-way to meet you, for they're real, good fellows with all their little faults—faults that they may blame yourself for; mind that! You'll do as I say now, James? Promise me; you won't you?"

"I will, old friend, I will; an' God bless you for openin' my eyes," said Himself, and then they went back to the house. As they re-entered the sick room they found a stir there—Herself was sitting up in the bed and they were all around her. She knew them at last.

"And how did you all come?" she was saying. "An' where did you leave the childhre (alluding to her grandchildren) and is this you, James, and you, Tom? And where's Himself?"

"I'm here," said Himself. "Shake hands, namesake," he went on stretching out his right hand across the bed to James, who caught it in astonishment. Himself held it and shook it. "Do you see that, Bridget?" he asked looking at Herself.

"Oh! thanks be to God I do," was all Herself could say.

"Is that all right?" said Himself, looking at the youth whose hand he held.

"It is, father," he replied.

"We make it up then, Jimmy, don't we?" asked Himself.

"We do," replied the other.

"Very well, said Himself. "Let bygones be bygones between the whole of us—girls and boys. Are yez all satisfied?"

They were; and in their women's way the women's eyes moistened and then there were women's tears.

"I didn't know I was hard on yez," continued Himself. "I thought I was doin' it for the best. I'm sorry now—and—well—I'll try to make up for it, if God spares me."

"Good man!" said the priest. "That's the way!"

"It's all your doin's, Father," said Himself.

"No, it isn't," replied the priest, "neither yours nor mine. It's God's work—that's what it is. And His blessing be upon it."

Four days later, in the evening glory when the shadows were lengthening to their fullest on the warm earth and the bleating of home coming flocks was in the air and the scent of the

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