

kind of hopeless determination to do his best, or else the sight of the fresh leaf of paper really renewed his courage, and endowed him with the spirit, and, joined to his experience, with the tact which—we are proud to say it—insured his ultimate success.

"Yes, please the pigs, we'll mind ourself this time, at any rate—and a watchful season is niver scarce," was the philosophical adage with which he now set down to recommence the "Bit o' Writin'."

"Sink my ould hulk to ———," began the admiral.

"Whist, Terry O'Brien," suddenly interrupted Chevaun, we'll have none o' the salt-wather curcin', now, if we want to escape more o' the *dhun-nus*.

The admiral fidgetted, but stood convinced, re-proved, and silent.

"The date o' the year," said Murty.

"Ay, ay, the date o' the year, first of all, ship-mat."

"Aighteen hundhred an' one, then," Murty repeated, slowly muttering; and as in deep thought he strove to call to mind the shapes of the figures which should designate the era, his pen described above the paper two or three cautious flourishes, almost as before.

A figure of 8, lying on its back, thus, ∞, was described. He snatched up the pen, and looked earnestly at the real commencement of his task. All was right. Neither pen, ink nor paper played him false, "this turn." He moved the sheet from side to side, accompanying it by wagging his head from shoulder to shoulder. He resumed, still repeating "aighteen hundhred an' one."

Two additional figures were produced, and the embryo document became antedated by about one thousand years. The whole of the figures stood thus, "∞01."

"There's the date o' the year, plain to be seen, we b'lieve, admiral," he said, glancing at his neighbour with ill-disguised pride.

"I like the cut o' their jibs, well, my hearty; they're o' the right sort iv a sart'nty; ay, ay, able-bodied saymen, every hand o' them."

"Musha, the goodness be praised," said Chevaun, with a happy sigh; "an' see what it is to get the larnin' arly; not brought up to the handlin' the paper like a cow or a horse?"

"An' isn't the day o' the month to be your tack now, jolly boy?"

"That's to be put in, bee all manes, admiral."

There were a few more passing flourishes, and then ensued the actual operation. The pen went up and down, heavily grating against the rough paper.

"Yee-ho! yee-ho! ho-yee!" sung Terence O'Brien, keeping time to the pen's movement, and shrill harsh noise; "undher way at last, my hearty:

I like the sound o' your tackle—it's like ould ship's in a stiff breeze—yee-ho!"

Murty smiled with the conscious glee of certain success, thus added to by the admiral's approbation, while, at his other side, his wife farther encouraged him.

"Didn't I know, Murty, *a-cuishla*? didn't I know the second offer 'ud thrive? that, an' barrin' the cursin'?"

And so, Murty went on producing, by degrees, a full crew of "able-bodied saymen;" not an unapt term, by the way, when applied to his striding, straggling, burly characters.

For two good hours was the amanuensis' hard at work. He would stop in the middle of a word; spell over the letters of it which he had just written; oblige the admiral to repeat it for him; endeavour to ascertain how much of its sound he had succeeded in typyfyng: get the remainder into his mind in a jumble and then proceed very ambiguously to express what had been very ambiguously apprehended. His "saymen," therefore, stood quite independent of each other' or, at least, but seldom linked together.

And, while placing a point over an *i*, Murty would steal down the pen, and not always exactly fix it over the proper character, and then turn it round and round, until the point became swollen to a goodly size; or, in crossing a *t*, his first essay was very gradually made, and the whole process amusing. He would, as the admiral called it, steer his instrument with his left hand, and then quickly and slowly scrape it across the upright letter. But, indeed, on this one matter, practice gave him courage, as he got on; for, at length, he would make a bold dash with his pen, and deviating from a horizontal course, divide into two parts, not invariably equal portions, whatever letters happened to come in his way. And pretty nearly thus, till his task was quite completed, did Murty reduce to paper the stentorian dictation of the ould admiral.

But his task was indeed finished. And he slowly arose to dry the paper at the fire; but in full recollection of a former adventure, as well as in obedience to Terence's warning of—"Fire-ship-ahead—a-hoy!" and of Chevaun's—"Have a care now, Murty, agra!" he kept it well clear of the turf-blaze.

Dried the document became without hap or injury. Murty, suspending it by a corner, strode the few strides which he could take on his cabin floor, and slowly held it up to the full view of his admiring spouse, who well understood his glance and smile to mean—

"See, Chevaun, what it is to have a scholar for your husband."

Nor was he slow in apprehending that the answering drawing-up of the muscles about Chevaun's