

Shemus was busily engaged pulling something black from a tree.

"What are you doing there, Shemus?"

"Sorra much, Masther Frank. It's only Bully; I let him down to rest himself."

"What was he doing?"

"Why, you know, he's always huntin' me about, so I hung him up by the nick. Begor, it was fine fun, to see him flappin' his wings this way;" and Shemus would his arms about, in imitation of Bully, which was no other than a fine venerable turkey-cock, so called on account of his bellicose nature. "That's the way he went on, flappin' about. Begor, it was fine fun; sorra a doubt but it was he that had the work ov it; faith it was pleasant to see him exercise himself. Now he's rested enuff. It's worth your while to come to see him; you never had sich fun; begor, it's pleasant."

"Not for Bully, I think," said Frank, as he took the bird. "He's dead; you killed him, you villain."

"Never mind him, Masther Frank. Now, may be he'll let me alone. Killed? arrah, who asked him to do it? Sure it was his own fault, bad cess to him."

(To be continued.)

WITHOUT A BLEMISH.

"Marian, do you suppose any one lives who has not an imperfection; and is not that imperfection a blemish?"

"No, one is absolutely perfect, Alfred; and even if he were so happy as to have but one imperfection, if this imperfection is not well taken care of, it becomes an actual blemish. But why do you ask such a serious question?"

"I took the Life of King Alfred, from the library this week, thinking I should like to know something about all the great Alfreds in the world. The first thing I came across in the preface, was, that Alfred's character was without a blemish."

"And you, Alfred, perverse fellow that you are, immediately concluded that Alfred had a blemish?"

"Yes, sister, just like every other mortal; unless sanctified, like St. John Baptist, before his birth."

"It is one thing to have an imperfection, or even a blemish, and another to keep that imperfection. If I have read history aright; (and one who reads Lingard's history is pretty sure to do so), Alfred had not only one imperfection, but several. Like many sons of good mothers, Alfred was a good boy and a good youth; and when he first took his seat on the throne of England he was as good a king as one so young knows how to be. But after a while, the holy lessons of his mother, Osburga, were forgotten by Alfred in the excitement of a court life. I suppose he was flattered like all kings, like

all persons in high places, and he became selfish. He was selfish in loving his own pleasure better than virtuous self-denial. He was selfish in desiring riches for himself rather than prosperity for his people. He was selfish in turning away his ear from the cry of the needy and the oppressed, and listening to the flattery of his courtiers."

"This is not a very pleasing picture of my Alfred the Great, Marian! I was willing to have you tell me of some small imperfection, but I do not care about having all the romance stripped from my hero."

"Ah, this is the way the world talks, Alfred! But let us see what happened. Alfred was sitting quite at his ease on his throne of Wessex. What had he to fear? He would have laughed if anyone had warned him of coming danger. He did laugh, no doubt, when his holy kinsman, St. Neot, reproved him for his selfishness, so unworthy of a Christian king. But, for all that, the storm came. Gothrun, one of the Danish chiefs who had been driven from Alfred's dominions, kept a keen watch upon the young king. On the very first day of the year 878, Gothrun sent to all his veterans to meet him, on horseback, at a certain place. On the 6th of January, the Feast of the Epiphany, the pagan Gothrun was in possession of Chippenham, the villa of the Christian king Alfred, on the left bank of the river Avon. It is supposed that Alfred was actually at Chippenham when the alarm was given, but managed to escape without falling into the hands of the enemy. But wherever he was hidden, he saw himself surrounded by heathen barbarians and almost without attendants."

"Not a very pleasant position for my Alfred the Great."

"Not very pleasant, but exactly the one to give our selfish young king a chance to think about the life he had been leading. This is one of the blessings of a good Christian training in one's youth. He had forgotten the precepts of his pious mother, Queen Osburga, while sitting securely on his throne. But when he found himself a wanderer, hiding from a pagan enemy, he remembered, with shame, the selfishness of his prosperity, and acknowledged, as any Christian would, that he had brought all these woes upon himself. Instead of doing rash things, as he was inclined to do at first, he listened humbly to his old thanes or lords. Finally, he dismissed them altogether from attending upon him; and, alone and on foot, found an island in the midst of a morass in Somersetshire. It was to this island, afterwards called Ethelingey, or Prince's Island, that all who remained faithful to Alfred at last found their way. During this retreat, alone and on