

by the poor about, the "Masther," was a man, indeed. If you doubt my word, you need only look at the well-thatched rows of stacks and ricks that filled the haggard. There was nothing of the Paddy-go-easy way about Mr. Maher; none of your windows stuffed with rags, nor your gaps with ploughs—not a bit of it; everything bore an appearance of ease and opulence. Mr. Maher's house, too, was altogether new; the parlor was tastefully furnished and carpeted, and a piano lay open near the fire. And the kitchen—but here I must refer to Mrs. Moran, Mr. Maher's house-keeper, for Mr. Maher buried his wife a few years before, and Alice being too young to manage so large an establishment, he very wisely submitted it to the government of the discreet Mrs. Moran. Mrs. Moran vowed "it the was tidiest kitchen in all Ireland." And no wonder, for it was well stocked with tins and chinaware, and pane, and the like, all bearing shining evidence to Mrs. Moran's cleanliness. Then the tempting rows of sides and hams of bacon that hung from the ceiling would make a hungry man's teeth water with delight. Now, having said so much about Mr. Maher's house, it is time that we should say something about Mr. Maher's family, for Mr. Maher's was a notable family. Mr. Maher had, besides our heroine, two sons and a daughter, all younger than Alice; and as Alice was but eighteen they must be young.

As I merely introduce them to my readers for acquaintance sake, we need say no more about them.

As our friends joined the family circle, the sports of the evening had already commenced. The kitchen was swept clean, and the bright peat fire threw its ruddy glow around the room. The Rover and Shemus-a-clough were quietly ensconced beside the fire. As soon as Uncle Corny appeared, the Rover did not forget his a customed salute of "How do you do sergeant? glad to see you;" nor Shemus-a-clough his "Hurroo, Misther Frank; arragh, didn't I do it well at the races—flung you into the saddle while you'd be saying Jack Robinson. Shure if I wasn't there you couldn't win; hurroo!" and he then performed his usual gymnastics. After the usual greetings and welcomes the party collected around the fire. The Rover occupied the one corner, Uncle Corny the other, superintending the sports. Uncle Corny seemed superbly happy when he attracted the attention of Alice Maher. "When a child she would often spend hours on the

old man's knee, with her hands supporting her head and her earnest eyes drinking in his strange words as he related his battles and adventures.

Then a tear would often trickle from the old man's eyes and moisten her little hands; and then she would fondly look into his face and nestle on his strong bosom, and ask, "What ails you, Uncle Corny?"

Who can define the old man's feelings as he shed these tears and pressed that nestling darling. Ah, his good heart was not yet dried up—a balmy softness, like the manna of the desert, came to sweeten its bitterness; for his feelings went back to the time when he poured out the fullness of his gushing love to her aunt—for Uncle Corny's first and only love was Alice's aunt.

As Alice grew up she resembled her aunt; the same mild expression, the same confiding look. Uncle Corny, though an orthodox Catholic, was something of a Pythagorean, for he firmly believed that the spirit of the aunt had passed into the niece. He spent much of his time at Father O'Donnell's, it was thought for no other purpose than to be near Alice Maher.

The servant maids and boys were collected around a large kish or basket of potatoes on the middle of the floor, peeling them for the colcannon. The maids took care to hang the first peel on the key of the kitchen door, for whoever came in first then was sure to be their sweetheart.

As I said before, the sports of the night had commenced. They all laughed immoderately at one young man who, in fishing for the apple, lost his balance and fell into the large vessel of water. He bore his misfortune very good humoredly, dried his neck and dripping hair. After several other games they placed clay, water, and a ring, on three different plates, then blindfolded the person trying his or her fortune. They all laughed or became grave as they laid their hands on the different plates, which betokened death, traveling, or marriage. So much importance do the peasantry attach to these rites, that they influence them very much. Even though free from these superstitious notions, Frank's heart beat heavily as he saw his Alice place her hand on the water; and, on a second trial, on the fatal clay. Alice, too, looked sad, though she tried to smile away her fears. "Alice," said Frank, "let not such a trifle annoy you; you know these things are of no importance."