

gave her half-a-dozen blessings, whether the hag liked them or not; stooped low to avoid another slap from the owl's wing, and closing the door hastily, ran down the path without venturing to look at the alder bush, for fear of the black cat. In a minute or two she was at the water's edge, and safe over the side of the cot. In an hour afterwards she was landed on the "quay" of Grange-Mellon, as the little wharf for facilitating the loading and unloading of turf-boats and others was called. Tom Fagan had done all in his power to make the two miles' voyage up the river, beside the windings, as cheerful as he could to his passengers. She wished him a safe return home, and a good night's rest, and long life to him; and, in high spirits and hopes, with her hand upon the treasure she carried in her bosom, she soon gained her sleeping place and crept into bed, without ever being missed or inquired for.

The next morning, at sun-rise, Bidly was deeply employed in the business of her dairy. Never did she milk her cows, or set her pans, or prepare her curds, with such alacrity and pleasure. A minute's idleness would have been torture to her; she was afraid of having leisure to think, for in spite of everything—Brian Oge's and Tom Fagan's encouragement, Peg Morrin's assurances, and her own bright dreams during the night—the warning of the miller's wife came across her sometimes, like a black shadow on a path of sunshine. She kept the gloomy feeling down by the mere force of employment; and she sung as loudly, and apparently as gaily, during her morning's work, as if it was not to be followed by the most important action of her life.

The love-draught was at length prepared. A richly-frothing bowl of sillybub received the whole contents of Peg Morrin's paper. Bidly never ventured to look on the charm curious as she felt as she shook it carefully into the bowl, and conscientiously stirred the whole with her left hand for several minutes. But she had not thus completed her work when she heard the loud music of the horns, as they left the kennel, and saw Brian Oge and Lanty come riding along, round the offices and orchard.

"God bless your work, Bidly!" said old Brian, reining up his horse at the dairy-door,—the common salutation to any one, however employed. Bidly felt her blood curdle at the words, for she did not think the mysterious and underhand work she was about was a holy one; but this was a moment's thought. She threw the empty paper over her left shoulder, and advanced to the door.

"The top o' the mornin to you, Bidly!" said Lanty, with a sort of half-look of mingled kindness and timidity.

"God save ye kindly, both!" was Bidly's almost inaudible reply; for the faintness of anxiety, the mixture of hope and fear, almost overcame her.

"An' what have you for us this morin', Bidly, *ma chree!*" said Brian, looking significantly at the two bowls of sillybub which he saw on the slab of Kilkenny marble, on which the milk-pans were ranged.

Bidly handed him his bowl, at which he smacked his lips; and having carefully added somewhat from his private bottle, he drank off the whole, and said—

"Why, thin, long life to you, Bidly Keenahan; for it's yourself that's the sowl of a dairy-maid! An' happy's the b'y that that'll get you! Lanty, my lad, you can throt afther me an' the dogs, round by the bawn an' across the tin-acre field, and meet us up at the rath; so don't hurry yourself. Maybe Bidly has somethin' to say to you. My blessin on ye both!"

Brian had good reason for this speech for he had called at Peg Morrin's cabin the previous evening, anxious to have his full share in the business, by warning the fortune-teller of the visit she was to expect, and putting her on the look-out for Bidly, as she was to come ferried across the river by Tom Fagan. The sound of the huntsmen's horse's feet were still echoing in Bidly's ears when she offered the love-draught to Lanty, with trembling hands and averted face. She would have given the world that Brian had waited, to sanction the deed by his presence. But she felt a sort of comfort in the very noise of the horse's feet, and hastened to present the bowl, ere she was quite alone with Lanty.