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"IT'S ONLY A DROP!"

It was a cold winter's night, and though the cottage where Ellen and Michael, the two surviving children of Ben Murphy, lived, was always neat and comfortable, still there was a cloud over the brow of both brother and sister, as they sat before the cheerful fire; it had obviously been spread not by anger, but by sorrow. The silence had continued long, though it was not bitter. At last Michael drew away from his sister's eyes the checked apron she had applied to them, and taking her hand affectionately within his own, said, "It isn't for my own sake, Ellen, though the Lord knows I shall be lonesome enough the long winter nights and the long summer days without your wise saying, and your sweet song, and your merry laugh that I can so well remember—ay, since the time when our poor mother used to seat us on the new rick, and then in the innocent pride of her heart call our father to look at us, and preach to us against being conceited, at the very time she was making us as proud as peacocks by calling us her blossoms of beauty, and her heart's blood, and her king and queen."

"God and the blessed virgin make her bed in heaven now and for evermore, amen," said Ellen, at the same time drawing out her beads, and repeating an ave with inconceivable rapidity. "Ah, Mike," she added, "that was the mother, and the father too, full of grace and godliness."

"True for ye, Ellen; but *that's* not what I'm after now, as you well know, you blushing little rogue of the world; and sorra a word I'll say against it in the end, though it's lonesome I'll be on my own hearth-stone, with no one to keep

me company but the ould black cat, that can't see, let alone hear, the craythur."

"Now," said Ellen, wiping her eyes, and smiling her own bright smile, "lave off; ye're just like all the men, purtinding one thing, when they mane another; there's a dale of desate about them—all—every one of them—and so my dear mother often said. Now, you'd better have done, or maybe I'll say something that will bring, if not the color to your brown cheek, a dale more warmth to yer warm heart, than would be convanient, just by the mention of one Mary—Mary, what a purty name Mary is, isn't it?—it's a common name too, and yet you like it none the worse for that. Do you mind the ould rhyme?—

'Mary, Mary, quite contrary.'

Well, I'm not going to say that she is quite contrary—I'm sure she is anything but that to you, any way, brother Mike, Can't you sit still, and don't be pulling the hairs out of Pusheen cat's tail, it isn't many there's in it; and I'd thank you not to unravel the beautiful English cotton stocking I'm knitting; lave off your tricks, or I'll make common talk of it, I will, and be more than even with you, my fine fellow! Indeed, poor ould Pusheen," she continued, addressing the cat with great gravity, "never heed what he says to you; he has no notion to make *you* either head or tail to the house, not he; he wont let you be lonesome, my poor puss; he's glad enough to swop an Ellen for a Mary, so he is; but that's a secret, avourneen; dont tell it to any one."

"Anything for your happiness," replied the brother sulkily; "but your bachelor has a worse fault than ever I had, notwithstanding all the lecturing you kept on