

THE BIT O' WRITIN'.

BY THE O'HARA FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

ON a fine morning in the month of May, Murty Meehan was occupied "threnching his little pee-aties." By the term "little," applied to them, Murty did not by any means wish to convey the idea that this growing staple crop was confined to a small space; for in truth the sloping potato-ridges occupied a goodly portion of the hill-side upon which they were planted; nor any apprehension that they must prove of diminutive size, owing either to his choice of seed, or to an unfavourable season, or to any other cause which the uninitiated can easily imagine. His "little pee-aties" he, however, called them, signifying thereby, (and his neighbours so understood the adjective,) first, that they were his—his own; second, that, even in embryo, he bore them a particular affection.

The French people would understand the term, in the double sense mentioned, better than the English; for among them, as we all know, *ma petite dame*, or *mon petit papa* or *mon petit* almost any thing, expresses, indifferently, simply that the object alluded to is theirs, and is little, or that it is an object of tenderness or of interest, or at least, be it little or not. But to a portion of the rather unfigurative community, for whose edification we write, it seems incumbent on us to explain why Murty Meehan applied to his fine sprouting plat of potatoes the epithet "little."

By Murty's reasoning, then, they were little; and yet almost every thing to him. They were dear to Murty—dearly loved! and therefore little. They had cost him, and were costing him a considerable trouble; and, until piled up at home, or in a pit in their own soil, to protect them against the frost, would cost him a good deal more; and therefore he owed them a paternal regard. Under Providence they were to prove for many a month after gaining maturity, the staple dish of his family, himself, and his "slip of a pig;" ay, for the whole coming year they were to stand him and his human dependents in lieu of beef, of mutton, of lamb, of veal, of venison, and of turtle; and hence they were his very, "little pee-aties." And just as "little," in Murty's eyes, as according to his vocabulary, were his "little wife," (a strapping though a simple

dame,) his "little daughter," (a full-grown woman) and his "little cow," and his "little horse," though neither animal shamed the standard proportions of its species.

Using, therefore, the term in the found meaning infused into it by Murty Meehan, we repeat, that on a fine morning in May he was employed "threnching his little pee-aties:" and again we beg a word of explanation, necessary, perhaps with some persons, to say that the operation alluded to consisted in digging between the potato-ridges, in the interstices which separated them, and throwing the fresh earth among the growing plants.

His position, as has been intimated, was on a hill-side. This hill-side sloped down to the banks of a little rivulet, covered with the freshest green grass, among which grew a profusion of wild flowers, and Murty's cabin stood within view and sound of the rippling water. Across the stream the ground again rose high, and was mostly wooded; so that our friend resided in a solitary and peculiarly beautiful little valley, owing to the curvings of which, on both sides of the stream, and upward and downwards with its arbitrary course, no other dwelling could be observed from his and our point of view. A pleasing impression of lonesomeness without desolation was therefore conveyed to the mind by the simple scene; and something of the same kind might have been its attractions to the unusual numbers of small singing birds which frequented it—to the linnet, the chaffinch, the robin, the thrush, the blackbird—to all of them in fact not omitting even the chirping, flirting wren, who were made by Providence to pipe or twitter a single note of joy or of contentment. So Murty Meehan's "little cabin" is situated amid features of much natural beauty, aided and heightened by cultivation; and in this case his favourite and generally bestowed epithet came true in every sense; for "little" indeed was his mud edifice; so little, that some surprise might be expressed as to how he managed to get in or out of its doorway, or even to stand upright under its straw roof—for Murty was a man of no common stature. Having been his own architect, as well as chief workman, one might, at all events, safely assert that in constructing it, he had not studiously calculated