

"Why, Oonagh!" cried Brian, as he entered, "was there a fall o' snow here that everything is so white?"

"No nor the divil a snow there was then!" returned Oonagh, who appeared in one of her tantrums. A fatal presentiment smote Brian's heart; he looked towards the place where he had last seen the meal-sack. Alas! "its corner was vacant," and Brian had not power to interrupt Oonagh, who proceeded to explain: "Sure, isn't it the mail that whitened it, an' I'll tell you how it happened, (the divil take it for mail, any how, but it's it that bothered me this day!) You see I spread the winna-sheet (*anglice*, winnowing-sheet) and began to sift the mail, an' bedad I was gettin' on like a race-horse, when didn't there a divil of an ear-wig, or some flyin' thing like it, jump into the very middle o' the hape! Well, sure enough myself was in a cowl sweat, when I hunted up an' down through the mail an' couldn't lay eyes on him, the ugly thief! an' at last, by good luck, I bethought of takin' the mail outside on the road, an' shakin' it up in little grains before the wind. But sure enough there was a high win' blowin', an' as fast as I shook it up, faix! the win' carried it off, an' sure if I had cotched the lad I didn't care, but afther all my throuble, divil a sight o' him I could see—himself an' the mail went off together, the ill-lookin' imp o' the divil!"

Brian's heart was too full for words, and sitting down on the nearest seat, he bent his head upon his hands, and wept bitterly. Poor Oonagh was struck dumb by the sight of his grief—never dreaming that herself had caused it.

"Musha, Briney! whatails you, alanna machree! what has come over you at all, at all, since you went out?"

Without deigning to answer her question, Brian hastily arose and left the house, anxious to give some vent to his sorrow, without being teased by Oonagh's witless inquiries. It was almost dark when he returned, and to Oonagh's great grief and astonishment, he went off to his bed without speaking a word. All the next day, and the next, there was gloomy discontent in the usually placid mind of Brian; it was not that he was angry with Oonagh, for woful experience had taught him that the poor simple creature, even in her blunders, (so fatal to their joint prosperity,) never failed to act with the very best intentions; no, but Brian was angry with himself that he had not sooner made this discovery, and profited by it. Amid all his sorrows, he looked upon his wife with much more of pity than of indignation.

"God help her, poor harmless crature!"

would Brian soliloquize; "she never manes to do hurt or harm to any one, but somehow she's doin' it to herself an' me both, jist as fast as she can."

In the mean time he began to recover somewhat of his wonted cheerfulness, and forthwith did the smile return to the unlovely countenance of his faithtul Oonagh.

"Oonagh," said Brian, as he came in from work one evening rather later than usual; "Oonagh, I was over spakin' to Harry Blake, the butcher, an' he's to come in the mornin' to kill the cow;" and having deposited his spade in its accustomed place behind the door, he drew a little stool to the hearth, and sitting down, drew out that never failing comforter of an Irish peasant—his pipe—while Oonagh busied herself (she never *bestirred* herself) in draining the water off the potatoes for supper.

"Musha then, Briney! are you goin' to kill the cow?—arra! what 'll we do at all for the dhrop o' milk?" and poor Oonagh laid down the pot of potatoes, and taking up her apron, wiped away the big tear which the threatened loss of her favorite had called forth.

"Well, sure enough, Oonagh!" returned Brian, as he shook the ashes from his pipe on the open palm of his left hand. "Sure enough, it's the last thing I'd do, (that an' hang myself,) to kill the poor ould crummie; but the divil a thing else we have to pay the rent, an' next Tuesday 'ill be Lammas day, an' it 'id be a poor thing if we'd be turned out without a roof to cover us; ochone, Oonagh! but you've made a poor hand of all our substance. God pity you, poor creature! an' me too, for I'm sure we want it." At this Oonagh broke out—

"Arrah, Briney, man alive! don't be makin' an *omadhaun* o' yourself! I'm sure it's me that has the sore times of it with you—throth, it 'id be a decent thing to kill a body at once, and not be atin' the flesh off their bones the way you are!"

"Well, well, Oonagh!" cried Brian, soothingly, "get me some milk, alanna! till I get my supper—that's a good creature *now*!" As easily soothed as irritated, Oonagh obeyed with all the alacrity which she could command, and there the matter ended.

Next morning the old cow was killed, and Brian took half a day from his work to cut the beef and salt it. When he had finished he surveyed the beef with a wistful eye.

"Well, now, Oonagh!" he exclaimed, "wouldn't it be the fine thing all out if we could keep that for our own use—och! then, but we'd live like kings an' queens, an' us that has sich a fine