

has been vainly struggling, almost alone, still to live, and if possible die, under the roof which sheltered himself, since her birth, her husband, since he became such, to the day of his death, and her fine young sons, to the day of their untimely demise, also. And at last she has but one melancholy prospect before her—that of seeing herself and her innocent Moya turned out upon the world, poorer than beggars, because in debt—and the one helpless from age, and the other on account of her green youth and tender character.

As Murty Meehan crossed the farm to Mrs. Moore's house, bent upon his matrimonial diplomacy, bitterly did he lament over the face of dilapidation worn by every thing around him, as well as on his path to the very door of the sad dwelling.—The fences were all broken down: the land overrun with stones, weeds, thistles, and brambles; and over that part of it which had once afforded pasture to a goodly herd of cattle, and a fine flock of sheep, a single half-fed cow—a present from himself by the way—now ranged, untended and mournfully.

Nor did the once comfortable farm-house and its adjuncts present a better appearance than the land. The disjointed gate of the front yard lay in the mire. No sturdy swine grunted and lorded it over the back-yard; no grand chorus of cackling geese, gobbling turkey-cocks, and quack-quack-quacking ducks greeted his ears from its recesses; two or three old maid hens alone, who, by sharing Moya's scanty meal of potatoes, just contrived to live, uttered some fretful sounds in one of the corners. One end of the barn had fallen in. The house itself was fast bending to decay and ruin. Here and there the thatch had slid off its roof, or been blown away by the winds, and was all over that greenish hue which indicates, in such material, a speedy approach to decomposition, while rank grass, moss, weeds, and furze, flourished through it. The once decent, though small windows of the humble mansion were shattered, and their framework shaken. Before the door, on both sides, lay a broken plough, a broken harrow, and the wreck of a farming cart; all had gone to pieces in the weather, as well as from the want of an eye and a hand to keep them in repair.

We have said that Murty Meehan scanned with a feeling heart all these symptoms of distress. One thought, however, brought him comfort. The ould admiral's gold would put every thing to rights. In the scattered heap of it which he had just seen on his supper-table, there was surely enough for the purpose. And deriving spirits from this reflection, Murty crossed the threshold of the house.

Moya was seated to her knitting, inside the door, when he suddenly appeared before her with the usual "God save all here." Murty never paid a visit to the widow's abode without bringing some little present, or else volunteering and performing some little piece of service; even his placid, good-natural face was

ever welcome. His sister-in-law sprang up, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him cordially.

"A-charra-ma-chree, Moya, how is every little inch o' you?"

"Thank God, Murty, I'm as well as my heart could desire;" such was now her habitual answer while her cheek, her eye, her very voice, contradicted her.

"An' the poor ould mother, a-chorra, how does she hold up?"

"Och, Murty, only poorly, poorly; she's making my heart to bleed for her—in good truth she is; and while Moya pressed the tears from her eyes with one hand, she pointed towards the window with the other.

The old woman was seated in a far corner brooding, as usual, over her troubles. They presented to her mind the one monotonous subject of bitter study and chagrin. She had been comfortable—she was a pauper; happy and she was miserable; the respected mistress of a plentiful home, and she did not now know how soon she must leave it for ever, to die under a strange roof, or perhaps on the road side. A plentiful home!—and now there was no butter in her dairy, no sides of bacon in her chimney, no brown loaf in her cupboard; the small vessel full of inferior potatoes, which simmered on a low fire, and a scanty allowance of milk from the ill-nourished "sthripper," presented to her by Murty Meehan, were her only food.

Seated on a very low stool, the tail of her tattered gown was turned over her head, and pinned partially round her face as if to shut her up with her own melancholy! her knees were cripped up to her mouth—a favourite position—as we have noticed among our humble people—of hopeless poverty; as if such a cringing and doubling of the person were meant to express the sense of self-humiliation weighing upon the heart: her fingers were dove-tailed across her knees; and with an exaggeration of the rocking movement before noticed in her daughter Moya, during her visit to Murty Meehan, she swayed her body to and fro—the low wailing which occasionally timed the motion imparting to it a character at once wild and despairing.

"How do you come on, my poor sowl?" asked Murty Meehan, bending his gigantic figure till his head came on a level with hers, in her lowly position, and his tones expressed deep and extreme commiseration.

Started from her wretched abstraction, she suddenly turned round and fixed her sombre, flinty eye on his; but it was some time before she could perfectly recognise and bring to mind the features of her son-in-law.

"Murty Meehan, is that you?" she at length said; "I didn't know you at onct: the sight o' my eyes is goin' from me—the very blessed sight o' my eyes; yes the way everything else is goin' from