

geon of the Vincent done his office well, Terence must have torn it from its usurped position.

"But we had better go to our work at onct," resumed Murty; and he fell to scraping, with more strength than skill, at the inside of his little son's ink horn.

"Musha, I wondher what *meeaw** is on id this turn, for ink?"

The ink which the amanuensis essayed to get into his pen had been produced by the squeezing together of alder-berries. To prevent it spilling out of the horn, which hung by a leathern strap from a button of Pauden's jacket, as he trudged to school, the primitive little vessel had been half filled with old linen, scraped almost into lint; into this pulpy substance the liquid became absorbed; and it required a certain schoolboy knack, acquired by long practice, and many failures, thence to press and scoop it into the funnel of the quill.

After sundry awkward attempts, Murty Meehan succeeded in charging his pen, brimful, and began to stir his fingers, wrist, and even arm, when he suddenly exclaimed, "Och! tunder an' ages? an' sure we forgot oursefs, intirely—where is the paper, admiral? Here was myself goin' to set about writin', widout the paper—an' that's a thing the schoolmaster, his own four bones, couldn't do, I believe."

"May my hulk go floatin' to ould Davy!" began Terence O'Brien.

"Musha, admiral, 'tis a scandle for you, an' a great sin, to be goin' on that-a-way, wid your ould Davy, and your strange curses," remonstrated Chevaun; "loock or grace can niver come of it to the writin'."

"I desarve your words, mistriss—I desarve id, but won't again, this long time." Terence felt selfishly penitent; "but here's the paper, shipmit; I had it in the locker all the while;" it had been fast buttoned under his jacket—he now presented it.

"An' see how it would'nt spake out for idself," remarked Murty, with a condescending smile, such as any man of parts might vouchsafe to those who admitted his possession of them, and whom he was about to amaze with a proof of their excellence. An while thus smiling on the undisguisedly ignorant admiral, Murty proceeded to smoothen down, as he honestly believed, the paper which had become much crumpled in the admiral's locker, and therefore seemed to require some such adjustment: but, in reality, Murty's hard raspish hands only produced a rough fuzzy surface on the sheet which was intended to bear the impression of his scholarship. It was at length properly set before him, and he again succeeded in filling the tube of his pen to the utmost it could hold.

"Now admiral, what's the writin' to be about?"

* Ill luck.

he demanded, approaching the pen to that point of the paper whence he intended to set forth upon his voyage of discovery through the dimly-apprehended ocean of letters—when lo, the overcharged instrument immediately voided its contents on the paper, and they flowed over it in a little sable current.

"Shipped a sey," commented the admiral, gravely and imperturbably.

"Spilt-milk, bee the soukins," said Chevaun, with wife-like sorrow and sympathy.

"The divvil welcome id, I say," lamented the penman; "couldn't id stay quietly where it came from? but wait a bit," winking on the sailor, and resuming his self-assured smiles; "we had a way in the school long ago, to get over a misfort'n like that; and I'll bet you anything but you'll see I don't forget it, this blessed day;" and—(shudder civilized reader!)—Murty protruded nothing less than his long tongue, and with it began to sponge out the rivulet of alder-berry ink.

With much relish for the experiment, the admiral sedately looked on, and "That's what we call swabbin' decks, shipmit," he observed; "an' the very thing to do after shippin' a sey, sure enough, barrin' it's a heavy sey intirely, an' thin the word's 'bale out,' afore swabbin', d'ye see me?" He paused, still evidently pleased with the dexterity of the operation, which Murty continued, with his winks and smiles of promised success.

But Murty was not quite triumphant over this obstacle to his penmanship. His first efforts only spread the ink, in rather a lighter shade indeed, over much a larger surface than it had previously occupied; a necessity thus arose for extending and persevering in the process of extraction; and when at length the paper was, at least in his estimation, and in that of his friend and his wife, pretty free from positive stain, its whole superficies had become thoroughly damp. But this latter circumstance did not occur to Murty nor to his observers.

"Now, at any rate, for the writin'," he said, again scooping out his "tint o' ink;" and, lest it should serve him the trick it had before done, he cautiously held the pen level till he had stolen it round his back, and then, with a calculating jerk, Murty tried to get rid of the superfluous quantity of ink it held.

"Murther!" screamed his wife, Chevaun, suddenly slapping her left eye with her right hand; "murther Murty, murther! its now you done the *dhunnus** intirely!"

The alder-berry juice had lodged full in the handsome, though too inquisitive eye of Chevaun; and the good dame was in that state of health in which, according to a quotation that has often administered

* Mischief.