

and Bessy were seated on the sofa near her.

"This is comfortable; ay, comfortable, by Jove," and Mr. Baker looked from the bright fire, over which he held his hands a few seconds, into his glass of sparkling punch; so it was hard to say which he pronounced comfortable; perhaps the two; or perhaps he was taking in the whole in his mind's eye, and thinking what a happy man Mr. O'Donnell was, with his kind wife and four children, as they sat around that cheerful fire, and that table sparkling with glasses and decanters and streaming lights.

Mr. Baker was an old bachelor—and strange things do run in old bachelor's heads; for, when they enter a little Eden of domestic bliss, they wonder why they were born to mope alone through life, without one tendril to keep alive the affections, or one green vine to cling to them for support.

"Heigh ho! Devilish comfortable!" said Mr. Baker, and he rubbed his hands and looked around again.

"Yes," said Mr. O'Donnell; "a bright fire of a chilly evening, a pleasant glass of punch, with your family around you, telling some innocent stories, or singing some pretty little songs, are comfortable things, no doubt, Mr. Baker."

"Devilish comfortable, though!" and Mr. Baker sighed.

"I wonder you never married, Mr. Baker," said Mrs. O'Donnell.

"Never, ma'am, never. Begad, I once thought of it when young; something or another knocked it up—I should tell you, the match was made, ay, made. I was so fond of that pretty little girl. I was devilish fond—I—oh, I see, I am making a fool of myself; and"—here he wiped his eyes and blew his nose very strongly—"that snuff makes a person sneeze so. Well, as I said before, she took the fever—devil take the fever!—God forgive me for cursing—bad luck to it!—What's that I said? Yes, she died, and I never minded marrying since."

After all, there were fine feelings lurking in that blustering rough man's heart.

"Never married, Mrs. O'Donnell; though Lord Clearall, for we are particular friends, says to me, 'Baker, travel where you will, there is no place so pleasant as home.'"

"Well, Mr. Baker," said Frank, "I didn't see you since the races of Cashel; how did you get home?"

"Capitally, boy, capitally. You rode devilish well, though; d—n me, but you did. A pleasant night we had at the hotel; pooh, hah, pooh!" and Mr. Baker leaned back in his chair, and then indulged in a pinch of snuff and a pooh. "That Mr. B— said something to me; didn't he? They know the lion is getting old, Frank, so they do. Pooh!—God be with

the good old times, when, if a man said anything to you, you need but send a friend to him and appoint a nice cosy corner of a field, and there quietly settle the affair. Now the law won't allow that satisfaction. Did you see that little affair between Cooke and myself how it was prevented? The police got the scent and dogged us. I always think that Cooke sold the pass, and sent word of the whole affair; for you know he was a stag, Frank—a stag; and knew well that I'd shoot him."

"The worst of it is, Mr. Baker, Mr. Cooke's friends gave out that it was you who forewarned the police."

"Oh! of course, Frank, of course, trying to shift the blame off themselves; he was a stag, sir, a stag—pooh!" and Mr. Baker proceeded with another glass of punch. "Good spirits this, Mr. O'Donnell; I generally put three glasses to my punch, but only two of yours; for, as Lord Clearall says—you know we are particular friends—well, as he says, 'Baker, never drink weak punch—never drink weak punch; it will sicken you, man; it is as bad as Pope and—' hem, ha, I mean—oh, to hell!—; yet, it's devilish stuff."

"Mr. Baker," said Mr. O'Donnell, who could scarce conceal a smile at the blundering of his guest; "Mr. Baker, I am told our worthy agent is about resigning, as he does not wish to carry out his lordship's orders about clearing the Lisduff property; do you know is it true?"

"Yes, I think he will; devilish good man he was; he and the old lord pulled well together; tender old man that old lord was; never tossed anyone out, but supported widows and orphans, or, as the present lord calls them, idlers and stragglers—ay, faith, that's it. I don't see why he should resign. All poor people on that Lisduff. What loss are their wretched cabins? Besides, his lordship wants to make one sheep-walk of the whole, or to let it to large tenants. Fine farm-houses are more comfortable and tusty than poor cabins; and, as his lordship says, 'Why the devil shouldn't he do as he likes with his own?' And why not, Mr. O'Donnell? Miss Kate, this water is getting cold, I fear. Cold water never makes good punch; hot, sparkling, and plenty of whisky, and there it is for you."

"Is it possible, Mr. Baker," said Frank, "that his lordship means to turn all the small farmers off the Lisduff property? Sure their little farms and cabins are as dear to them as is his palace to his lordship."

"Well, well; that may be, Frank—that may be; but then you know they belong to his lordship, and why not do as he pleases with them?"

"And what will become of the poor people, Mr. Baker?" said Kate.

"Can't say, Miss Kate, can't say; I.