

brought with them a bottle of "Wyso's Old Malt," which each one lifted to his lips more than once with the most affectionate greeting.

"Connor, my boy," cried mad Jack Halligan, *stretching over the bottle to his friend*. "Take a pull, my son; 'twill warm the cockles of your heart. Why, blood alive, man? you're drinking nothing."

"Never mind me, Jack," replied McDermott. "I've had quite enough for the present; and I'll take no more till we get home."

Now Connor, though a good-humored, gentle-mannered fellow, who quarrelled with nobody, was notoriously obstinate and persistent in his resolution when once he had "taken a thing into his head," and his friends knew that it would be useless to press him further.

"Well, there's no force, ma bouchal," he said. "So here's to your good health, Connor, and to Nora O'Brien's bright eyes."

The bottle went round among the other three, and their chorus rose high—loud enough certainly, if not quite in time and tune.

"Here we are in the region of ghosts," said Condy Rourke, with thicker and huskier utterance than usual, as they mounted the hilly road. "They say the ould monks come out of their graves every Christmas Eve, and walk in procession and sing psalms through the ruined aisles of the old abbey yonder."

"Why, then," said Dan Barry, with a look of tippy-aw, as he regarded the ruined walls of the ancient structure, wierdly silvered by the moon-rays, "I wonder is there any truth in that at all?"

"Tut, you gomeril," rejoined Jack Halligan, contemptuously; "don't you know well it's all raumaush—ould granny's nonsense?"

"By my faith!" exclaimed Connor McDermott, suddenly, "I'm strongly inclined to try. 'Tis closing fast upon twelve o'clock, and we'll soon hear the Bells of Shandon rolling their chimes upon the breeze. I've a great mind to watch for the ghosts."

Jack Halligan and Condy Rourke burst into a hearty laugh, which Dan Barry echoed very faintly as he peered around.

"By my soul, Connor," cried Jack, "that would be a funny notion indeed. I like the idea of you, my bould and daring hayro, sitting amongst the tombstones yonder, and shivering in the night frost, whilst we were having our jug o' punch snug and warm by ould Michael O'Brien's fireside, with purty little Nora sulking in the corner. No, my boy, I'm thinking you'll be after letting the ghosts of the ould monks alone to-night."

"You'd better not be so sure o' that," replied Connor, whose organ of "oppositiveness" was immediately excited. "I've have often thought I'd try if there was any truth in that story o' the monks appearing with book, and bell, and incense, at Christmas Eve just as midnight came on. There was a great lot of 'em slaughtered there when that wicked old hag, Elizabeth (bloody King Harry's daughter and granddaughter all in one), was Queen of England; and 'twas a McDermott was abbot at the time. Yes, I've a great mind entirely to do it—I have now."

"Oh, nonsense, Connor," remonstrated Jack—"you're only joking."

"I don't see the nonsense or the joke either," rejoined McDermott, with asperity. "My poor father, Heaven rest his soul, often stopped and turned in there of an evening like this to say a prayer or two on the spot where the high altar stood; and why shouldn't his son, I should like to know? Yes, I'll do it—pull up."

"Why then now, Connor, are you serious?"

"Never more serious in my life," replied McDermott, whom opposition only confirmed in his purpose, especially when he had an extra glass of liquor, on board, as on the present occasion.

"Be it so, then, in the name of all that's foolish," exclaimed Jack Halligan, checking his horse. "Wilful man must have his way."

Connor McDermott sprang lightly to the ground, and with a cheery "good-night," cleared the ditch and strode away to the ruins.

"Good-night to you, lad," shouted Jack. "A pleasant vigil to you. I'll take your remembrance to Nora, and in the morning you can come and tell us