

"No, *alanna*," said Larry; "shoe-aside is Latin for cutting your throat."

"But he didn't cut his throat," said the widow.

"But sure it's all one whether he done it wid a razhir on his throat or a hammer on his head; it's shoe-aside all the same."

"But there was no hammer found, was there?" said the widow.

"No," said Larry. "But some people thought he might have hid the hammer afther he done it, to take off the disgrace of the shoe-aside."

"But wasn't there any life in him when he was found?"

"Not a taste. The crowner's jury sot on him, and he never said a word agin it, and if he was alive he would."

"And didn't they find anything at all?" asked Oonah.

"Nothing but the vardick," said Larry.

"And was that what killed him?" said Oonah.

"No, my dear; 'twas the crack in the head that killed him, however he kern by it; but the vardick o' the crowner was, that it was done, and that some one did it, and that they wor backguards, whoever they wor, and persons unknown; and sure if they wor unknown then they'd always stay so, for who'd know them afther doing the like?"

"True for you, Larry," said the widow: "but what was that to the murder over at the green hills beyant?"

"Oh! that was the terriblest murder ever was in the place, or nigh it: that was the murder in earnest!"

With that eagerness which always attends the relation of horrible stories, Larry and the old woman raked up every murder and robbery that had occurred within their recollection, while Oonah listened with mixed curiosity and fear. The boiling over of the pot at length recalled them to a sense of the business that ought to be attended to at the moment, and Larry was invited to take a share of the potatoes. This he declined; declaring, as he had done some time previously, that he must "be off home," and to the door he went accordingly; but as the evening shades had closed into the darkness of night, he paused on opening it with a sensation he would not have liked to own. The fact was, that after the discussion of numerous nightly murders, he would rather have daylight on the out-

side of the cabin; for the horrid stories that had been revived round the blazing hearth were not the best preparation for going a lonely road on a dark night. But go he should, and go he did; and it is not improbable that the widow, from sympathy, had a notion why Larry paused upon the threshold; for the moment he had crossed it, and that they had exchanged their "Good night, and God speed you," the door was rapidly closed and bolted. The widow returned to the fireside and was silent, while Oonah looked by the light of a candle into the boiling pot, to ascertain if the potatoes were yet done, and cast a fearful glance up the wide chimney as she withdrew from the inspection.

"I wish Larry did not tell us such horrid stories," said she, as she laid the rushlight on the table; "I'll be dhramin' all night o' them."

"Deed an' that's true," said the widow; "I wish he hadn't."

"Sure you was as bad yourself," said Oonah.

"Troth, an' I b'lieve I was child, and I'm sorry for it now; but let us ate our supper and go 'o bed in God's name."

"I'm afeared o' my life to go to bed!" said Oonah. "Wisha! but I'd give the world it was mornin'."

"Ate your supper, child, ate your supper," said her aunt, giving the example, which was followed by Oonah; and after the light meal, their prayers were said, and perchance with a little extra devotion, from their peculiar state of mind; then to bed they went. The rushlight being extinguished, the only light remaining was that shed from the red embers of the decaying fire, which cast so uncertain a glimmer within the cabin, that its effect was almost worse than utter darkness to a timid person, for any object within its range assumed a form unlike its own, and presented some fantastic image to the eye; and as Oonah, contrary to her usual habit, could not fall asleep the moment she went to bed, she could not resist peering forth from under the bed-clothes through the uncertain gloom, in a painful state of watchfulness, which gradually relaxed into an uneasy sleep.

The night was about half spent when Andy began to awake; and as he stretched his arms and rolled his whole body round, he struck the bottom of the bed above