HAMING BUILDING TO LANGE STATE

## [For the Post and TRUE WITHER ] THE CURSE OF BALLY CREGGAN.

Br EMTHY "Yes," said Murty, after looking furtively around a few times to make sure that his late passenger had not rejoined them and with a misgiving that before he had misrepresented the story of his terror and his white face as he lay on his back in the stream when the widow saw him, that horrible witness had not quite left him free to act on his own responsibility, "Yes,ma'am,I was dramin' just, or asleep when I fell off my sate into the water; all because 'Ould Moll' there, bad soran to her, ran to get a drink and stopt up sudden and threw me holus polus out of the car, the blessed minnit that you saw me, Mrs. Kays-

"Yes, I suppose that was it, Murty; but the instant I woke up and saw you lying in the water I thought something dreadful entirely happened to you; you lay there without stirring hand or foot, and your face was as white as any sheet, and so frightened lookin' that I was sure what you saw and heard was the wery thing that made a dhrame I was just after laving so full of trouble and mistor;

"Ab, then, ma'am, that was all the matter with me." b veracious Murty hurrledly midded, seeibg now how painfully near he had been to doing an irreparable injury, and realizing, to his dismay, that perhaps it was not a dream he had after all; for did not Widow Kavanagh's brief reference to her own dream satisfy him that he was perfectly conscious and quite swake while he watched with spell-bound eyes the weird, terrible vigil of the apparition and the changing expression on its appalling face as the woman's dream thwarted or answered its fell purposes? But he had one thing, notwithstanding, quite clear before him : the necessity of keeping from the widow's knowledge his own experiences; while, on the other hand, he was exceedingly anxious to learn from her the particulars of her dream, if for mothing else but to see how his might correspond with hers-in other words, whether it would confirm or weaken his theory.

"Well, now, ma'am, if I amn't askin' too much, would you mind telling the dhrame you had; I won't ask you ma'am, if you don't like me to hear it; but (this with an assumed indifference) I have been often and often told that nothin out good can come out of dhrames that a pergraph has so near the blessed Christ-mas; and a have four or five miles to go yet before we get to Loughres, and your tellin' will, in throth, pass away the time."

To a request so astutely put, there could be only one answer-compliance; and, if the Zender cares to know what fancles and images filled the mind of a simple, sorrow-stricken, Lonely woman, as pitying sleep shut out the misery and memory of the day before, the writer will, in his own words, gratify that wish as best he can.

## PART III.

Widow Kavanagh, according to her own statement, had no more than seated herself, as comfortably as circumstances would permit, in the cart after leaving Ballycreggan. when she felt drowsy and was, ere they had proceeded far on their journey, in the "land The care and distress dreams." the preceding day, the vicissiher chequered life, her and and lonely state, were soon forgotten, and her own bright youth came back again. Quite close to the Dunkerrin Abbey (where Murty and the ghost parted the month of June had dawned her again and she, just on werge of womanhood and before she had known the man with whom her lot in life was cast, .was hurrying to divine service, which a tiny sanctuary bell had, a moment before, announced as about commencing. Knots of people coming from all quarters; from across the green fields and along the shady lanes, from the same direction as herself and from opposite roads-joined her on the way, all converging in the large and orderly congregation like so many tributaries in the sea-going river. Everything was literally smiling. Hature exulted in the full rich garb of June; the unclouded sky added a tender glory-far beyond the poet's fancy or painter's brushto the widespreading, gorgeous green on which it shed its bright, pure glow; the fresh fields and fragrant meadows, the blossoming bushes and the treess with their fresh solinge, the pleasant, though humble, homes contracting agreeably with the more pretentious dwellings of the middleman and squire: the weird, venerable walls of Dunkerrin abbey contributing no less to Nature's charms than to the Sabbath peace and blessing which reigned around,-these were objects in the fereground, that the eye delighted to rest on; while, in the distance, the hills of Clare cut a blue sharp outline in the western horizon and which Loughrea and the lake beside it are besined; and rivalets from these hillsides, making up for their shallowness by their acaceless chatter, glinted like silver threads in the sunshine as they dropped over the mountain boulders and ran along their green banks on their way to the sea-wending river in the valley below.

Fair, comfortably-circumstanced, with no lack of admirers, a candid, guileless heart, a genial, hopeful disposition, a sweet, religious mature,-no happier girl tripped her way to Dunkerrin chapel than Kitty Daly. Though nothing of an unusual character seemed to her to be on the topis this particular Sunday, Beishe was somewhat at a loss to account for the happiness and exultancy she haw on every face. The chapel stood hard the abbey rules neatled coally

the broad-spreading shade of the lvied walls and the trees surrounding them, and appeared to welcome every comer as, if it had a heart big enough and throbbing to gather into its bosom and protection all mankind. The boys, rigged in their best and summoning up their smartest looks to win their sweethearts' favor; the girls themselves without a frown or jealous glance and showing that life was more of a song than a dirge; the old people, with sober cheerfulness, nodding and chatting pleasantly to each other as they met and hurried on to the chapel, and looking superior to the encroachments of age-all these appeared to have entered on a bright, long holiday. Within the church the moving, clattering feet became hushed as death; and the silent, worshipping throng were as those who had left care and the world without, wrapt, as wthe priest conducted them through the solemn mysteries, in a common prayer and a common purpose. The holy sacratice over, the people returned to their homes slong the roadside, up among the green'hills, in the pleasant fields; and the peace and good will of the morning seemed only angmen : that yet held out in deathless defiance

by the hour of worship they had given and by the hour of worthip they had given and the kindly intercourse in which they had met. Soon from the chimneys high and low imbedded in the deep thatch, or rising proudly from the slated roof—the smoke of dinner fires gracefully oursed upward. The after noons neighborly gatherings, the evening's shiless amusements followed, and the day, without a cloud or shadow, was quickly passing by. While the worshippers had sone to their respective homes. ecattered and gone to their respective homes, Kitty Daly, strange to say, allowed the members of her family and her companions to re turn without her and found herself irresistibly drawn to a little bridge which, not three hundred yards above the ruins of Dunkerrin abbey, and farther up the hillside at whose base almost both abbey and chapel stood, spanned that small stream which runs down by the ruins and draws a silver line through Into this stream the rivulet coming from the hallowed spring within the grounds of 'the' old abbey, pours that water which constantly bubbles out of the well and flows across the road at the point where, as we have seen, Murty Kearns met that strange mishap. Standing without any vo-lition of her own on the bridge, Kitty Daly felt a rapid and extraordinary change come over the smiling and un-troubled landscape. To make for home as

quickly as possible was her first thought, but she found that she could not move nor cry out; she was as though under the influence of an inexorable fate which, while it threw her into an utter physical torper, yet left her mental faculties free and active, nay, as-sisted them in a mysterious way by causing them to be concentrated on any objects which it brought to their ocntemplation. Thus, as if to see the source or beginning of the mournful change which was taking place around her, she saw at some distance up the stream a dark, repulsive figure approach the water and pour some into it from a vessel which this sinister apparition carried, and then disappear in a twinkling, just as a flash of forked lightning, darting from a cloud which was quickly and ominously epreading in the west, shot a streak of jagged flame from horizon to zenith and pressged, with painful certainty, the coming storm! The crashing peal of thunder that followed made the ground quiver beneath her feet and drove the terrified flocks from the pastures to any shelter the fields and houses might give them. People ran for their lives to their homes;—and as sickening panic seemed to have taken possession of all things, animate and inanimate.

The sky was darkened and hidden away with rushing clouds of an inky, fearful color, and she could hardly see her hands before her in the intervals between two flashes of lightning, blinding and awful in their vividness. As one of these lit up the country with an appalling splendor, spell-bound Kitty Daly could see that the water which ran under her feet bore on its tossed and troubled bosom, a black streak of

some slimy, loathsome liquid; and this ex-tended from the point at which she saw the phantom stoop in the act of letting the contents of the vessel he had drop into the ourrent to as far as her eye could reach down the water that was stained with the foul perceptible change from girlhood the water which yet appeared unpolluted by the poisonous looking liquid that defiled the and the partner of her life carried one by one stream. She would have given the to the grave! How her mother's instinct company) stood, as stands to-day, the thatch- whole world to prevent those infatuated, mis-ed chapel which, since she was able to walk guided people from tasting what she now death as he stood on the threshold misty outlines. As row after row to Mass, she attended. She thought that knew was poisoned water; but physically to put out another light in her al. moved by her and showed some one of those peaceful, cloudless Sundays in she was absolutely helpless and could no mos upon more entreat those unfortunates not to drink, and mothers only know Through these preceding one, her heart throbbed with fastening the door both the than she could move or act in- shifting scenes of her own life, through this dependently of the weird and inflexible power by which she was controlled. Those who drank almost within arm's reach of her, she recognized; -indeed, amongst them were, to her horror, some of her nearest hate and cry of defeated wickedness of purand dearest, as well as several of those whom she had met and spoken to only a few hours before, going to Mass with her. These she thought had greatly altered in look and manner since morning: prematurely-aged faces furrowed by misfortune and dissipation made it all but impossible to recall in them the fea- in America on the field of battle, and when tures on which innocence, content, and peace had shone so short a time before; and as these people drank the changes in them passed before her eyes, as though the effects of their irrational act had been gathered into the experience of a few brief moments, and exposed to view the gradual, but certain transitions which could only occur in the lapse and vicissitudes of many eventful years. At the the sound of a Christmas bell, or same time she saw passing and repassing those the memory of a Christmas prowho, proof against the terrible infatuation mise, shut out from the lonely affiliated that led others to ruin and disaster, went standing out clear and picturesque and to where the roisoned waters could not reach; and, although changes were apparent in these people (many of whom she knew and loved) and care and trouble had sprinkled their hair with grey and the transmitting touch of time | their dark shadows on her path! had left its traces deep and consploudits on their features, yet there was that in their melted into the ridgy upland, finally into the looks and demeaner which spoke of a peace Fertile plateau that fringes the lower plain in and hope tar beyond the power of turmoil and affliction either to reach or darken. During all these phases of transition, the shadow of that foul spectre who had destroyed the brightness and peace and content of that Sunday of her youth and had, she felt, wrought all the gloom and horror of her vision, would, ever and anon, cross the path of the wise and good; but she her spellbound eyes looked when she could see only a purer and holfer radiance in found herself tripping light-hearted and their faces as though a temperation had been happy to Mass on that June Sunday dread shadow passed over the foolish and the ing calm everywhere. The lights through

er, and added a darker tint to the mysterious over the winter's landscape. Bright and thought comes to my mind that there might darkness that was gathering closer, and thicker, and more threatengly around them! As if thought had taken to itself wings on which she was borne, wondering and appailed, Kitty Daly found herself by bedsides in squalld cabins and rulned homes—the June Sunday of her loyous youth—its morning of happiness and peace as well as its evening of fields; and she was soon alone. She could be Your holy will; if not, I'll strive to be other consideration away. When the reunited storm and mystery—having passed away like hear distinctly the fairmur of the stream the last beam of the setting sun. Here she hard by, and even the trickle of the water saw children dying without the nourishment that might prolong life; men, old before their | flow crossing the road to join the larger ourtime, togging around on their wretched pal- rent. The old abbay lay in light and shade lets of straw and wild leaves in the agony of at the moonbeams fell "unbroken on it some malignant fever, and looking that or chequered it with their trembling, some mangant ever, and loosing that the cartering speechless but heart-sickening want for some wavering light through the encircling intigation of their pain, which the tender, but, trees. The hoot of the owl; the mitigation of their pain, which the tender, but, also I empty, hands around them could not give; women sick and mosning away the windows; the shivering of the ivy; the oplittle remnant of life in their shattered frames as well as women, half demented from hunger and hardship, cronching in their fireless, cheerless homes as starvation, or meat and tract were offered them by the sleek, heartless sustained this wondering solitary spectator, bible-reader, who rubbed his olly hands and And scarce had she noticed what I stood on the muddy floor, on which through the broken roof the pitiless rain was dismally dripping, stood, I say, in the presence of that dire extremity of human trial and suffering

any bribs which might befter soul and as if by magic, had sprung up high and state-faith away; homes in which, although it was it as old people were wont to tell, it looked the blessed generous Christmas time.—as she in the years long past; the interfer of the interfer of the interfer. gladness, no holiday display appeared,—but, instead, crumbling roots, rage, and wretched-ness; hovels in which, at first entering, one could not see his hand for the smoke that seemed to be everywhere except; where it should be going up the chimney, and for the windowless walls,—much less see the unfortunate occupants who, with eyes through the trees in a broken wave of melody which the smoke had bleared, huddled so tender, so exquisitely touching, that this about the meagre fire, watching with wolfish poor woman of many cares and sorrows felt in the wood as the next one; and my iday is, impatience its scanty flickering flames poll as if Heaven's own glorious bells were ring. Mrs. Kavanagh, that ould villain, MGrennithe nettles and Indian meal that a slokly, half- ing through the clear air and hely stillnes of gan, was the manes of sendin' you that news-starved looking woman was putting into a Ohristmas night! pot for-for their Christmas dinner | Fairs and markets, at which but few persons were, and rected abbey, she passed through it; and, as these, as if a postilence broaded over the if conscience stricken at thus intruding at a many's broid sore of pasture land before it land, moved about listlessly with a strange, joins the river which bears it to the sea. hopeless look in their eyes, and took the hopeless look in their eyes, and took the money that they got for their lean and scraggy cattle and their poorly-filled sacks of grain, as though they could not keep it for themselves or procure therewith even the necessaries of life, of which they stood so painfully in need-for none could mistake place to a smooth floor, spectral figures the looks in their eyes for anything else but moved noiselessly and reverently up the

famishing prolonged hunger! Then this sad beholder was brought face to face with grim eviction and its cruel work; associated prominently with which she saw, to her astonishment, the sinister pharasacal McGrennigan leading his bailiffs and underlings in the inhuman work of casting out on the roadside shivering, ragged; starving men; women; and children as if the winter sky could be less pitying than the tottering hovels whence they were driven like cattle; and, more marvellous still to her, she again beheld the phantom of her dream, this time at the land agent's side, prompting him, she thought, and so close to him that why McGreinigan did not instinctively shrink from its presence or cry out through sheer dread, was to her, judeed, inconceivable-and when, instead of shunning the horrid spectre of her vision, he, in in reality, seemed to court it, she could not seperate the two in her mind thereafter; to her they were twin-curses which produced the suffering, the wretchedness, and the ruin about her. Then followed the dismal, fearful sequence; heart-broken mothers and weeping children on their way to the poorhouse from which they shrank with an instinctive dread and abhorrence; dejected, hopeless men out of whom energy and ambition were beaten, wasting away in famine and disease; young and old of both sexes falling by the roadside without an ear, except that of Omniscience, before whose tribunal they were so soon to stand, to hearken to their death moan. All this she saw; and her woman's heart went out to succor the poor and miserable, who were now, in truth, beyond the reach of human help and sympathy. It required no tongue to tell, or instinct to prompt her, that the horrors of the "bad times" (as the famine of 1846 and of following years was called) were brought to her mind again and their sad and terrible experiences reproduced with fearful distinctness. And strangest of all, though, she thought, the fields, the streams, the thatched chapel, the sacred ruins of the abbey-the peace, happiness, contentment of that June stream. To her utter dismay and horror she | Sunday of her unclouded youth were still sees, notwithstanding the raging storm, a fresh and palpable as if they were the things large number of people hurrying to the of yesterday—yet she herselt, without any · to mixture floating upon it, and then advanced age, felt endowed with the lean over the banks to drink it; while others faculty of prescience, which showed continued their way and pointed to the abban continued their way and pointed to the abbey to her the joys and sorrows, the plenty and well, whither some had already gone to take | want, the sunshine and shadow of later days, when she saw her bright, promising children panorama of human trial and suffering, came and went away the terrible spectre of her dreams with a hideous, fiendish leer as death visited her home; with a look of unutterable pose, like that of a hungry wild beast balked of its prey, as the fluttering souls passed beyond its power and purpose. Yet it used still to come and go; and when, on that dark, memorable day, the report reached her ears that her only surviving child, John, had died the "iron" of that crushing sifiction had "entered her soul," making her long to lay her wearled head and broken heart at rest in the quiet grave,—in this trying and bitter hour—this supreme moment of desolation and ordeal—the phantom's sinister shadow more frequently returned and darker grew; but the shimmer of an angel's wing-

Like the varied reflections that pass over the placed surface of a woodland lake on a summer day, scene after scene of her life dame and vanished; and she finds herself once again—this time in the depth of winter -looking at the thatched chapel of Dunkerrin as the people were just issuing from the Midnight Mass of a Christmas Day. A different scené certainly from that on which resisted; while, on the other hand, as the of the long ago; yet there was a deep foothetring, it evoked a wild maniac laughter and the chapel window shone on the frosty ground ing poor John with the rest in my drame. I made them drink the deeper, swear the loud- outside and spread a welcome far and wide clear and peaceful looked the moon as she stood high in the heavens, and the countless stars that studded the unclouded sky spark- from America, and that some other John Nellie has experienced both, and no Galway led with a glad, exulting light, as if not quite unconscious that they so shone on the first killed' we read. God," and here she reverent-Christmas the world ever saw. The people's tread died away on the roads and on the frozen from the well to the stones beside it and its fluttering of the bat through the sashless pressive loneliness of the ruin itself,—these were calculated to awe, and perhaps terrify. the strongest natures; but a sublime trust in the night it was, and its blessed associations, And scarce had she noticed what I have flust written ere an extraordinary transformation occurred in the old abbey. "Well, Murty, there was only one thing in in the act of putting a reeking hot potato. The walls—those broken, dilapidated swalls the world that I thought it would stand for into his capacious mouth, gave a sudden and,

memory of a Christmas pro-

widow the gloom and the fears and the great

grief that,—somehow or other, though she could not tell how this could be,—were

gradually drifting back into the night whence

they arose so cruelly and mysteriously to cast

star-like light, and a hush of expectancy, awful in its intensity, held for a moment everything in deep and solemn silence. The next instant the music of a Christmas chime rang out joyously from the beliry, its silvery entrancing tones, -surpassing aught she ever heard, -coming through the trees in a broken wave of melody Ohristmas night!
Drawn irresistibly to the door of the resur.

service evidently not intended for mortals, dropped on her knees at the very base of the holy water fount, which stood immediately within the main entrance. Before she could realize that the loose stones, weeds and rubbish (which had covered as long as she could remember the interior of the ruins) had given abbey towards the altar and knelt in lines which extended across from wall to wall. From their faces everything that spoke of earth, -its cares and contentment, its sorrows and joys, -seemed to have passed away; but, instead, there was a peace about them, and not a sign of pain, unless the longing, wistful look in their eyes might be interpreted as such. The church is filled to the doors ere she can see whence this vast phantom congregation comes—so quickly and so densely filled that had she observed it in time she would have left the church to escape being crushed to death. But although there was not a vacant spot visible in the spacious nave and wide transepts and some of those weird worshippers surrounded her closely, yet physically she felt as if she were the only one present. The altar was ablaze with strange a fragrance, sweet and delightful, through the air. The sacristy door is thrown open; a spectral priest and boy attendants, in long white surplices, pass reverently through it towards the altar steps, and the Holy Mass (she was sensible, although a solitary word of the rubric does not reach her) commences. Slowly and solemnly the sublime mysteries are commemorated, the phantom congrega-tion, with bowed heads, following the priest from beginning to end and the expression of intense and pathetic expectancy on their faces, giving place to a sacred, pure satisfaction, far beyond mere human conception to fancy, much less to describe. The Mass over, tuary and she could see their wrapt and adoring look as they moved towards the door by which they had entered. The people, as though making a short thanksgiving, remained a few minutes after the priest and then began to leave the charch. For the first time she could take a calm and some. what deliberate survey of their features as they departed very slowly and respectfully in unbroken lines. To her astonishment she thought she saw some familiar faces; nay, after the first flush of appalling surprise was over, she recognized amongst them several on which the grave had closed many years before. Her schoolmates and the companions of her childhood, whose early death caused the most poignant of her youthful sorrows; acquaintances, old neighbors, friends, relatives -some long dead, others whose deaths were, fresh in her memory, -these, or their shadows glided past and vanished together into "thin air" as if the western gable, unsubstantial as themselves, had melted away at their apher dead children and her dead husband. And instinct is right; a line—one of the last with a mother's longing and a wife's devotion to join them, she felt-indeed, her soul asheipless was broken—that her mourned departed were infinitely better and happier than even her heart-her true loving human heart-could wish them! While the ecstacy that filled her bosom on thus beholding, even for a moment and under such strange circumstances, those who were every. thing to her on earth, still thrilled her, the last line of the departing congregation had disappeared through the gable; the lights on the altar had gone out; the flowers had concerned; for John Kavanagh-his mother's vanished; and the interior of Daukerrin dream and Murty's conjecture were true-no Abbey—its lonely walls, with the encroaching ivy clasping them in its he mailed a note to his widbwed mother, close embrace; the solitary elder communicating the pleasing fact of his arbush that grew in the chancel; the rival in good health, with a snug sum of sashless Gothic windows; the nettles and from childhood, frowned on her half-dreaming senses; and Murty Kearns, on his back in the shallow stream flowing from the rules, his eyes darting from their sockets and his face as "white as a sheet," woke with his terror-wrung shrick, the sleeping woman back to every-day life and its atern, cold re-

## PART IV.

"But now, Murty," she said, when her dream was told, "There is onething that strikes me as very strange,—and, somehow or other, I think there's truth in it,—and that is, not seehave hope that he is livin' yet; and often the be some mistake in the name when the word of his death came in that newspaper, Kayanagh was meant in that 'list of the ly raised her eyes towards Heaven,-"God, this holy Christmas eve, grant it to be so if it nationt and resigned to that blessed will for lovers got to Kilkeernan Tommy Burke had the short time I am to live. Indeed, it won't | trought back the disheartening news of the be long anyway before I hope to join all I eviction. Without losing any time, however, love where there are no evictions and no partings!"

"In troth, ma'am, when you were tellin' others, I said to myself at wunst, there is fast as a half-sowereign 'tip' could make the some truth in dhramins' after all.' I'll bet John-wrge a fresh horse. my life that g'll see your son yet in Ireland, oul water."

that's wrong,—it struck me that McGrennigan and the spirit that poisoned the strame could only be two things EVICTION and INTEMPER-ANCE. That seemed as clear as clear could be—indeed, it did," she earnestly and slowly repeated; "every time I saw them together something kept whispering to me that if these two were banished out of Ireland-like St. Patrick banished the snakes -- it would be a happy day for Ireland."
"Pon me word, ma'am, I declare to you,"

Murty said, "although the missis at home? calls me a reg'lar gommerlah, I can see as far paper about John's death, and that it our story, to the surprise and, I need not add, was another John Kavanagh, and not your John at all, that was killed in the war. I would not put it past the ould schamer of the world, that never was happy unless he was makin' others miserable. Aye, I'd bet my life, when the raisons is: found out by and by, you'll see he had a hand Kavanagh, whom, and whose family, he had at any rate, in sendin' that paper, and I don't known and respected for years, wrote a letter doubt a bit but what he is at the bottom of of remonstrance to Mr. Bodkin, stating that all your trouble." So spoke Murty; re- it could not have been possible for his friend membering now for the first time, a plau- and old schoolmate to be aware of the state sible and, indeed, well grounded rea-son for the land agent's special and dismissed from his confidence and emoruelty and injustice in carrying out the de- ploy an unscrupulous agent who had caused cree of eviction against Widow Kavanagh, much and unprovoked mischief in the neighduring that season of forgiveness and good borhood. This letter, giving in detail some of will—the holy Christmas time,—this being the most glaring acts of intustice, elicited a no less than the fact that nearly forty years before she had rejected the suit of Elias Mc-Grennigan, who never forgot the grudge then engendered against his successful rival, and tion of Widow Kavanagh took place. The which, as we have seen, hore its bitter fruit willy agent always apprized for some time long after its object was dead, and gone be-

youd the reach of human enmity. Thus Murty spoke and thought as they neared Loughres and saw the mists and haze of the morning slowly passing away, as the sun was already showing its light and shed- him, and concluded that flight was better ding its beams on the church towers and tail than the questionable defence of the crooked roofs of that little western Irish town. A warm welcome, which sent a glow through her sore, bruised heart, was given the home. lights, and flowers of no earthly bloom shed less widow by her sister and her brother-inlaw; and ere long the tea.kettle was pleasantly simmering and the potato cake turning district which, it is perfectly true to say, he brown, as gratifying evidences to Murty of an immediate and comfortable breakfast. Under such circumstances we can, for a little, leave our much tried friends and turn our attention to an incident or two which occurred while twe were listening to conjecturesdreams though they were-which those incldents proved to be, in the main, correct.

"Tommy, asthore, like a good little fellow, run as quick as you can over to Ballycreggen with this letter for Widow Kavanagh. I heard the poor woman was to be thrown out of house and home yesterday or to-day; and the celebrant and altar-boys left the sanc; this letter may have something for her that will bring her to comfort yet," said that most kind-hearted of wemen, Mrs. Grady, the postmistress of Kilkeernan.

"For Widow Kavanagh?" cried her daughter Nellie, who was preparing her toilet for a trip to Galway that day, with a startled, anxious air. "Let me see it; maybe it is from John."

"Whisht, you simpleton," interjected her somewhat pragmatic father; "how could you be expectin' a letther from a dead man?" Yet love's instinct. But I should have stated that Nellie Grady and John Kavanagh were at one time lovers; and circumstances only delayed their marriage. Love's instinct, I say, was right; the hand that traced the supersoription was so unequivocally John's that she would have known it after fifty, much less two short, years. And the sceptical parent had to give in-an important fact which added no little speed to the gait of of the evicted tenants as could be found with Temmy Barke, who, now keenly interested bimself, set out for Ballycreggan as fast as his

lega could carry him. At these who may have taken the trouble of reading these pages very well know, the my readers' indulgence I could mention many t childless home, bereaved wives faces more familiar and dearer than the widow's house was closed, a huge padiock an instance of altered and improved times at the rear an uncontrollable yearning, expecting that and front of the dwelling, when some line which had not yet passed contained Tommy, panting after his lively run, reached it. A neighbor informed him of the sad facts of the previous day, and to leave - reveals every dear, loved face, Ex- further told him that Mrs. Kavanagh had OFFT JOHN'S. On their features shone a light left very early that morning for Loughrea. and contentment far transcending earth's So, back Tommy trudged through the gutter; power to give; and, as her aching heart beat, and, I suppose, murmured at tardy Fortune. who had been so long coming with her gifts. But, Tommy, lad, thine are natural complainsured her, when the spell that sealed logs. Look yonder, where those clouds are her lips and made her physically scattering; the sun shines and shall bring

many a blessing ere it sets ! Now, in those days, although we must admit that the postal system had made great make no better selection, appointed John strides towards its present success, yet it happened that a letter, posted at Queenstown, for certain remote parts of Ireland took generally longer time to get to its destination than was necessary for the passenger. And such was the case in the instance with which we are elder communicating the pleasing fact of his armoney, of his great joy in being so near her other weeds that, with the loose stones and once again, and of being now in a position to mortar from the tottering walls, covered the remain at home with every prospect of comfloor; the Dunkerin church, as she knew it fort for the rest of his life. This done, he started by a later train than that which carried his letter and was soon speeding through Oork and Limerick for Galway, every station on the way, as he got nearer home and familiar scenes, adding to his anxiety to be with those whom, of all the world, he loved bestthe dear good mother and the fond true girl he hoped to make his wife. Taking a car at Galway he immediately proceeded homewards. When within two miles of Kilkeernan whom, to his great gratification, did he meei? None other than his faithful Nellic, who thought him dead on that dark, dreadful day, when, through the mists which s heart almost breaking sent thick to her eyes, she road his name amongst the killed!

We will not lightly draw aside the curtain that hides love's anguish and love's joy. was visited that day; nor was there any tarrving to see old friends, for the thought of Ballyoreggau and the lonely widow waiting there so long and hopelessly drove every the returned immigrant, with swelling heart knowing now that some ordel, pitiless enemy must have sent that terrible news about his me about them you seen in the church be- death to his mother), got the Galway driver yant and about missing John's face from the to change horses, and set out for Loughreans

Dinner was about commencing in that litwith the help of God. And now, ma'am, now the room in Loughres, preparatory to Murty's Mrs. Kavanagh," continued our friend Murty, | returning home, when the jingle of a "alde-"it's me that would like to know the manin' car" was heard on the pavement and it censed of that strake of black you saw in the at the door. Up bounded the impetuous strame, and why the people could be so passenger who, without the ceremony of foolish entirely and madlike drinkin that knocking, quickly entered the apartment Murty Knaros, who was facing the door and "Well, Murty, there was only one thing in the act of putting a reeking hot, potato —seemed to have assumed their original and that was warrant! And it struck me.— for him, almost latel ory of blank amezement, proportions and roof; the torn-down belify, God forgive me if I say or think anything feeling sure he had seen a ghost. But the

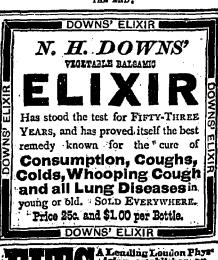
mether's instinct quickly realized all; and in less time than it takes me to write it mother and son—so long, and so cruelly parted—were in each other's arms. What words can picture the scenes of this meeting : the pang of the retrospective, the rapture of the present, and the hope of the future?

While these events were occurring, certain other incidents,—which go to show into what brief periods the most momentous matters are sometimes crowded, happened, which very olosely concerned our friends as this joyous re-union was brought about in such an unexpected and providental way. These were no less than the flight—the ignominions flight, of McGrennigan from the scene of pleasure of all over whom he ruled as agent and tyrant. It would appear that Mr. Gately, a neighboring landlord, whose attention was painfully drawn to the condition of things on the adjoining estate by the rumored removal of Mrs. curt and unwelcome note to McGrennigan, informing him that Mr. Bodkin would be down to Ballycreggan that day on which the evicbeforehand of his employer's rare visits and furnished with his probable movements during his stay (which was invariably less than a week), surmised at once that something had gone egregiously wrong against manner in which he had discharged his duties. So, feeling that he was found out at last, and with the dread of certain detection staring him in the face, he gathered together his accessible funds and quitted forever the had blighted. Whither he fled no man knew. That it was he who sent the paper with the cruel news to the lonely, anxious widow was found afterwards to be beyond all reasonable

In due time, Mr. Bodkin reached his paternal estate. A good, kind-hearted man, in his own way, although prone to trust too much to those who filled responsible positions under him, he was shocked to hear the sad stories which were poured into his ears by those over whom he now felt himself to have been for years the unconscious tyrant. Swift and complete restitution was, he thought, the only course possible for him to pursue; but the acts that had wrought misery beyond reparation, as they were disclosed to him by the victims that yet remained, made him sensible of the utter impossibility of doing justice to thos who, dead or emigrated, had been driven from their homes, without pity, to die, beg, or, if circumstances permitted, seek in kinder lands the sustenance denied them where nature and every law of right destined them to remain!

As much, however, as he could do in the way of restitution, he was firmly resolved to do, and that without delay. On that very evening, - so near the blessed, generous Christmas time, when the best thoughts and purest springs of action that our weak nature possesses are awakened to a fresh and better life,—on the eve of the great Christian festi. val, I say, messengers were sent to as many letters reinstating them in their holdings and promising that every grievance of theirs should, as far as was now practicable, be re. dressed. Indeed, did I dare draw so severely on before very long, at Ballycreggan; but I shall only venture to notice a few facts touching the Kavanagh family. John Kavanagh and Nellie Sullivan, as might easily have been inferred, were united in the sacred bonds of marriage a few weeks after his return from America, and in due course of time a bunch of sunny, pure faces used to gather round their happy, gentle grandmother, on many a Christmas eve, to hear from her anew, as she sat in her old home and saw the dead come back again in the sweet, wondering faces round her, her Christmas dream and its rich fulfilment. Mr. Bodkin, strongly urged by his neighbor, Mr. Gately, and indeed realizing himself that he could Kavanagh his agent; and our friend Murty Kearns and every tenant on the property had reason to speak proudly of the new management and hopefully of the brighter prospects it put within their reach.

As for the gentle, patient widow, to whom trial and joy, in large measure, were given, whatever trust she had ever had in the holy season of Christmas was now incressed a hundred-fold by the many and quite unexpected blessings, which that memorable Christmas, now nearly twenty years ago, had brought her; and still, in honored old age, she feels and thanks the Father of all, as she did that happy morning in Loughrea, when with a light and grateful heart, as the Christmas chimes from the adjacent abbey pealed sweetly at the dawn of day and spread through the emiling country those messages of "peace and good will" which never grow old, she opened her eyes under far different and happier circumstances than she did for many a day before, and realized that, for her and here, the "Curse of Ballycreggan" had passed away forever! THE END.



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