

The hostess stopped for a moment in the full flow of her occupation, and looked at the interrogator.

"Why, then, Misther Donovan" said she, "you and yours must have any place in the house yez want."

"Jemmy!" she called to a thick-set man, "mind the customers here, till I go wid Misther Donovan down to the kitchen; it's the quietest spot in the 'Arms' to-night."

"Ah, then, Mary Donovan," said she to the girl we have before noticed; "bud you're welkim. I wondher you wouldn't spake. In throth, achora, I'm glad an' I'm sorry to see you, for sake ov the poor mother that's gone. Cum down to the kitchen; I know you'd rather be there than among all the crowd wid their noise and their talk, it's myself that's sick of them."

With those words she brought the party, leading Mary by the hand herself, down a passage which led backward to the kitchen.

"Now, Misther Donovan," said she, as they entered that apartment; "yez will have no one to molest yez here, and can settle whatever yez have to settle in pacc an' quietness."

"Beg your pardin, sir," she continued to a man who sat at the fire, with a hat drawn over his eyes, of a shape now known as a "Jerry," but then totally unusual in that remote district; "beg your pardin, sir," bud this young woman is cowl'd, and th' evenin's sharp, an' if its plazin' to you to further over a little more, there'll be room, an' to spare, for all parties."

"I'm obleeged to ye; that'll do, now," she continued, as the stranger hastily drew himself more toward the side of the hearth, where a huge fire of turf blazed, sending out a welcome glow.

"Now, Misther Donovan, what'll you an' your friends take? I'm goin' to get a cup of tay for myself an' poor Mary, the crathur, an' you'll take sumthin' in the manetime."

"Oh, the hard stuff for us, Missis Keogh," said one of the men.

"In throth, Phil Corkran," she replied, "you're bould enough to answer for yourself; I'll go bail; but it's Misther Donovan I'm askin' an' not you. The best in my house he'll have at his command, for he's a 'dacent man and was a

comfortable man too."

"That's as much, Missis Keogh," replied the man addressed as Phil Corkran, "as to say I'm a comfortable man, but not a dacent man. Well, it's all right, av coorse, but Misther Donovan is to thraet me now, whether you'll do it or not."

"Give us some spirits, Missis Keogh," said Donovan, glancing deprecatingly at the kindly hostess; "id's Christmas-eve, ma'am an' we're all good enough according to our waken'g, if we only remember the blessin' that fell upon the earth many hunder years ago, to tache us humility." Phil is a bit sharp; but there's worse nor him."

"Id's good to hear you, Misther Donovan, sayin' that," she answered; "it's Christian-like to the man who dhrove your little stock to this day's fair, for your Novimber rint, but I'm not bound to think the better av him fur all that. Natty!" said she to the little boy, "go up to your father an' bring down a bottle av spirits an' some tay. Hurry, like a good child."

Natty soon returned with the required articles, and while the good woman of the Kilshane Arms busies herself in getting ready the tea for her guest; and while the men are making their settlement, we will take a retrospect of the events which gathered those individuals in the kitchen of the humble hostel of the valley village.

Seven years before the Christmas-eye to which we refer there was no more comfortable farmer than Ulick Donovan in all the district within ten miles of Kilshane. He held a couple of hundred acres of land the best in the neighbourhood, and it laid within a short half-mile of the little town. His kith and kin had dwelt for many a hundred years before him in the pleasant farm-house, whose white-washed walls gleamed a short way up the slope of one of the hills which surrounded the valley, and which was built at the extremity of his holding next the mountain. By that alternation of events peculiar to the history of Ireland alone amid European nations, he, the rightful heir of the soil, had found himself the tenant of it at the hands of the owner at law. However, those territorial lords had rendered the change of fortune of the Donovan family