

"Well, I was frightened, Billy," said Norah. "Poor, brave, honest Mat Donovan, that every one is proud of him, and fond of him! But I said to myself that God was good, and that I'd offer up a few prayers for him. Then I heard the shout, and I knew he was safe. And I said to myself, too, he must be after escaping some danger, or the people wouldn't shout that way. And, Billy," she added, smiling again, "I knew you'd be the first to remember me and to relieve my mind. So when I saw you rushing in, I was sure all was right."

Billy returned to his chalking and went on carefully till he came to *m*—which letter was so well executed that he stopped to admire it—but said nothing.

"Tell me what happened, Billy," said Norah, leaning her head against the back of her chair, as if, after all, she felt weary and exhausted.

Billy told how a high rick, that was higher than the top of the chimney, and, in fact, as far as he could judge, as high as the beech-tree, had fallen while Mat Donovan was "cutting a bench" up near the top of it. And how some thought he was "made brass of" on the ground; and others that it was only smothered he was by the hay on top of him; while a few asserted positively that Mat was "ripped open" by the sharp hay-knife. But Billy was able to bear witness that he had seen Mat with his own eyes, quite whole, neither pulverised nor embowelled, and, to all appearances, having the free use of his lungs.

"I'm very glad he's not hurt," said Norah. "But if he was," she added thoughtfully after a pause, "he'd have a good nurse in Nelly to take care of him."

"So he would," returned Billy Heffernan; "and his mother, too."

"Nelly is very good," continued Norah. "She's the best-hearted poor thing in the world. And she's very fond of me. She and me were always great friends, Billy."

"So ye wor," returned Billy. "Always."

"And if Mat met with an accident, he'd have some one to take care of him," rejoined Norah, as if thinkin' aloud.

"But, Billy," she continued, "if anything happened you, you'd have no one. And what would you do?"

"I'd take my chance," Billy answered. "God is good."

"That's true," she replied fervently; "God is good. But 'tis hard for you to feel happy all alone by yourself. And you are going on very well, by all accounts, and getting more comfortable every year."

"I know who I have to thank for that," he replied.

"Who?" she asked in surprise.

"Yourself, Norah," returned Billy Heffernan, leaning on his elbow upon the shop-board and proceeding with his chalking. "You know what I was before you made me take the pledge; and that's what I couldn't do for the priest himself. An' I know I'd never be able to keep id on'y for you prayin' for me, as you said you would. I do be wondherin' now at mysef. I can hardly b'lieve I'm the same unfortunate Billy Heffernan that every wan used to have compassion for, when I see the respect they all have for me now. Begor, I think sometimes 'tis humbuggin me they do be, the way they talk to me an' ax my advice about this or that, when I think how the smallest child in the place used to have a laugh at me before."

"Well, if I gave you a good advice at that time, Billy, sure you ought to listen to another good advice from me now?"

"What is id?"

"Well, you know what I mean," she answered, as if she wished to avoid being more explicit. "I often think of id this while back, when Nelly Donovan and myself do be talking about old times."

"Norah," said Billy Heffernan, quite agitated, as he hurriedly wiped out the letters he had chalked with such pains on the lap-board, "for God's sake don't talk to me any more that way. I'm well enough as I am. I want for nothin'. An' if I am lonesome idsef, 'tis lonesome I'd rather be."

Norah smiled. She smiled a little while before, because she was amused. But this was a different kind of smile altogether. Yes; Billy Heffernan's refusal to listen to what she was about proposing to him gave her pleasure. Yet, if he did listen to her advice and followed it, he would have given her pleasure too—pleasure sweetened by self-sacrifice. She would be glad to see Billy Heffernan and

Nelly Donovan happy. Yet she was glad that Billy Heffernan would not listen to her plan for his happiness. Self-sacrifice is sure of its reward either way.

"Well, Billy," said Norah Lahy, "you will remember my words hereafter."

Oh! that "hereafter"—how heavily it fell upon his heart!

His back was still turned to her; and with one elbow on the table, and shading his eyes with his hand, he went on with the chalking again; but instead of carefully formed letters, he covered the board with mere dots and shapeless figures. He felt almost angry with her. "Sure she has no right," he said to himself, "to be talkin' that way. Don't she know I'd as lief be dead as the way I do be when id comes into my head?" And Billy held the lap-board near his eyes—for it was now nearly dark—and seemed to be trying to decipher the hieroglyphics he had traced upon it. "I don't know what's comin' over her this while back," he continued, glancing stealthily at Norah; "every wan used to be remarkin' that you'd never hear a word from her that'd look as if she was thinkin' uv dyin' at all. Even her mother says she never heard a word about id from her. But this is the third turn wud her dhrawin' id down to me these days back. She began t'other night about the evenin' I carried her over the sthrame. There's some change comin' over her I'm afeard, or she wouldn't be goin' on this way."

He was interrupted in his reflections by the entrance of Honor Lahy, who—rather to the surprise of Billy—was immediately followed by her husband.

"Wisha, is id there you are, Billy?" exclaimed Honor. "Mat is after axin' where you wor; an' not wan uv us could tell him. We wor all wonderin' what happened you."

"I ran down to tell Norah, whin I see he wasn't hurt. I thought she might be unaisy."

"Well, well," returned Honor, as if she felt quite ashamed of herself, "see how not wan uv us ever thought uv that. An' sure I might 'asy know her mind'd be troubled; an' for all I never thought uv id." She knelt down as she spoke, and arranged Norah's shawl more comfortably about her shoulders. "We had no right," she continued, as she pinned the shawl, "to run away an' lave you by yoursef. But I got such a start thinkin' poor Mat was killed, that I didn't know what I was doin'. An' sure on'y the mercy uv God 'tis killed he'd be."

Phil had flung himself in a chair in an almost gasping condition after his exertions. He fixed a severe glance on his wife, and even on his daughter, and then shook his head and looked into the fire. There was no sign, not the shadow of a symptom of a "little nourishment," and Phil Lahy seemed to have made up his mind that all Christian charity had vanished from the world, and that there was nothing left for him but to be resigned. And he was resigned! He did not complain in the least. No murmur would ever escape his lips. He was never a grumbler; never "a man for complainin'." And in a spirit of resignation and self-abnegation, Phil Lahy dismissed all thought of his own sufferings from his mind, and only thought, as a patriot and philanthropist, of the grievances of his fellow-men.

"Billy," said he, addressing himself to Billy Heffernan, who had turned round and now stood with his back to the shop-board, resting against it, "these are quare times."

"How so?" Billy asked.

"Well, I'm after havin' a talk wud that poor crawler Tom Hogan; and the fact is I'm not the better uv id."

"How so?" Billy asked again.

"I was never a man of extreme views," returned Phil. "I admire some of the extreme party for their genius, and I never took part in the cry against them. But I'm a man of moderate views, and always was. Old Phil Morris and I could never agree on some points. But, Billy, 'tis enough to knock moderation out of any man to talk to a crawler! You heard the conversation I had with that man sitting at this fire?"

"I remember," replied Billy Heffernan. "An' Mat remarked as we wor goin' home, that all he was worth in the world was sunk in his little spot—that he hadn't a penny; on'y as fast as he'd have id lettin' id all go in dhrawin' an' buildin'."

"Well, that same Tom Hogan calls me over an' I passin'. 'Phil,' says he, 'I couldn't help laughin' a while ago when I thought uv you. Faith, a person'd think,' says