

"Well, I will," said Billy; but he felt, he couldn't tell why, as if he would rather not.

"Wait for a minute," said the dragoon, and he walked quickly back to the shop.

He soon returned, and handed to Billy Heffernan what seemed a small box wrapper in paper.

"What will I say?" Billy asked, as he put the parcel in his waistcoat pocket.

"Well, I don't know," returned the dragoon, as if he felt at a loss.

Billy Heffernan very naturally looked at him with some surprise.

"Say," said he, at last, "that it is from a friend."

"Begob," thought Billy Heffernan, "he is a bad case. I wondher what do she think uv him? 'Twould be d—n dhroll if Bessy Morris, above all the girls in the parish, would marry a soger. Begob, ould Phil 'ud choke her afore he'd give her to a redcoat. Come, Kit, be lively, or they'll be all in bed afore we get to Knocknagow."

Billy Heffernan and his mule had left the busy town with the cloud over it some miles behind them when the sun was disappearing behind the hills upon which the dragoon turned round to gaze when his companion would have called his attention to the Waterford mountains—by which piece of eccentricity the reader has lost an exciting legend of those mountains, which Billy Heffernan was about relating for the amusement and instruction of his military friend. But it was all owing to Bessy Morris—who we fear has much more than that to answer for. As the stars began to peep out one by one—and there was one star that shone with a pure, steady lustre, and Billy Heffernan felt sure it was looking through the beech-tree into a face as mild and beautiful as itself—he began to wonder why he felt so tired and sleepy; but, recollecting that he had had no rest the night before, he turned to his mule, and said, "Wo! Kit," in a manner that made that sagacious animal not only stop, but turn round till her nose touched the shaft, and look at him. The fact was, Billy Heffernan was in the act of yawning as he pronounced the word "Wo!" and a stiffness in his jaw as he attempted to add the other word suggested dislocation, which so alarmed Billy Heffernan that his mule's name escaped from him with a cry, as if some one were choking him. And hence Kit not only halted at the word of command, but looked round to see what was the matter. And, finding that there was no rude hand on her master's windpipe, Kit expressed her satisfaction by advancing her fore-leg as far as possible, and rubbing her nose to it.

Billy Heffernan placed one foot on the nave, and then the other on the band of the wheel, and climbed up till he stood on the side of his car. He put back his hand several times, and attempted to catch the skirt of his barragain coat under his arm. But the skirt was too short; and, after two or three unsuccessful attempts, Billy Heffernan looked down at himself with a look of drowsy surprise. He first thought of the elk's horn fixed to the rafter in his own house; then Phil Morris's old goat came to his assistance; and at last Billy Heffernan thought of Mick Brien, and a shake of the head signified that he was satisfied. In fact, Billy Heffernan, before climbing into his creel, was attempting to tuck the skirt of his ratteen riding-coat under his arm, and was much astonished on finding that trusty companion of his journeyings missing for the first time in his life; for the ratteen riding-coat, its owner averred, was as good to keep out the heat as the cold, and, consequently, he was never known, winter or summer, to take the road without it. For a moment he thought he must have left it at home, but then that glimpse at the half-moon through the rent in the skirt occurred to him and he knew he had the riding-coat as far as Phil Morris's. Then the idea of the half-moon shining through the rent in the riding-coat brought the roofless cabin to his mind, and the pale faces upon which the moonlight fell so coldly, and Billy Heffernan shook his head as he remembered how he had wrapped his riding-coat around poor Mick Brien.

Billy Heffernan climbed into his creel; and, resting his arms on the front, and leaning his chin on his arms, waited patiently till the mule was done rubbing her nose against her leg; and as the mule continued rubbing her

nose against her leg rather longer than usual, her master began rubbing his nose against the sleeve of his coat. There was, in fact, a remarkable sympathy between Billy Heffernan and his mule in the matter of rubbing the nose.

The mule at last moved on of her own accord, for which piece of considerate civility her master resolved to give her an extra fistful of bran when they got home, for he was so tired and drowsy that he felt it would be a task to say "Yo-up, Kit." Indeed, the mere thought of being obliged to speak brought on another yawn, and Billy Heffernan turned his open mouth to his thumb—which required less exertion than moving his hand to his mouth—and made the sign of the cross. To neglect making the sign of the cross over the mouth while yawning would be even worse in Billy Heffernan's eyes than to forget saying "God bless us" after sneezing, and almost as bad as going to bed without saying his prayers, or sprinkling himself with holy water.

The mule jogged on quite briskly, as if she knew her master's good intentions regarding the additional fistful of bran, while he leant over the creel, with his cheek resting on his arm, as a weary traveller might rest upon a gate, and looked lazily along the road before him in a somewhat confused state of mind. Becoming too sleepy to maintain his standing position, he dropped down in the bottom of the car; and after a pantomimic wrapping of himself in the ratteen riding-coat, resolutely resolved to keep wide awake till he reached home. In spite of his firm resolves, however, it occurred to him that he must have dozed for half a minute or so, as he opened his eyes on missing the rumble of the wheels.

"Yo-up, Kit," said he, but Kit never stirred.

He turned upon his elbow; and, looking through the laths of the creel, saw that the mule was drinking from a little stream that ran across the road.

Billy Heffernan rubbed his eyes, and thought he must be either dreaming or bewitched. But there could be no mistake about it. There was the identical little stream over which he had lifted Norah Lahy that bright summer evening long ago, and in the middle of which he stood the night before and wept.

"Well, that bangs Banagher!" exclaimed Billy Heffernan, rising to his feet, and rubbing his eyes again. "I thought I wasn't wudin' tin mile uv id. I wondher what time uv the night might it be?"

He was wide awake now, and there was an anxious expression in his face as he looked about him, while the mule moved on briskly, seeming quite refreshed and lively after her draught at the little stream. An old fear, by which he was always haunted when descending that hill on his way home, fell upon Billy Heffernan. Most people, we suspect, have experienced some such feeling when approaching home after a lengthened absence. But it weighed upon Billy Heffernan's heart after the absence of a single day. True, he was alone in the world. He had no father or mother, sister or brother, wife or child, to awaken that feeling of dread. Yet he never descended that hill on his way from the busy town with the cloud over it without fearing that, just after passing Mat the Thrasher's clipped hedge, the children would run out from one of the next group of houses to the middle of the road, exclaiming, "O Billy! poor Norah Lahy is dead!"

The light shone brightly, as usual, in Mat Donovan's window, so that it could not be very far advanced in the night. And when he passed the clipped hedge, and saw Honor Lahy's window giving the hamlet quite the look of a town, Billy Heffernan's heart began to beat as pleasantly as when he discovered that his assailant of the night before was Phil Morris's old goat, and not the ghost of a Hessian. He climbed out of the creel at his own door; and, taking the key from under the thatch, let himself in.

There was not as much as a cat to welcome him home, nor a spark upon the hearth. Yet Billy Heffernan felt that he *was* at home, and was happy in his own way. Taking the mule from the car, he let her find her way to her crib, and went himself for "the seed of the fire" to the next house. Having lighted the fire, he took the tackling off the mule and hung it on the bog-wood pegs. The elk's horn reminded him of his riding-coat; and after a glance at the fire, which seemed between two minds whether it