

**NATURE AND
ART. VOL. 2**

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NATURE AND ART

January 1, 1867.]

BIZZ AND HER FOES.

By MRS. S. C. HALL.

IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.



HERE is no use in putting it off any longer, ma'am," said the cook; "the upshot of it will be, we shall be murdered intirely, if we don't get a yard-dog—those skelping, keeking, flying here and there, 'talian greyhounds—poor shivering 'tomesies, I call 'em—all legs and no body—such shadders as *them* are no more use for watch-dogs, no, not so much as that little hairey-walker Weazel, with a head so like a dandelion, that if I blowed it hard enough, I could tell what's o'clock."

There was a pause; cook noted the unconvinced expression of my face, and resumed—

"So exposed as the place is, ma'am!—standing in a corner, and not a hap'orth to hinder the stable and all belonging to it.—Oh, ma'am dear, what are ye saying about the Po-lesse? I'd take an oath this blessed minute on all the books that ever war shut or opened, that the last of them blue-bottles that ever rounded the corner of the Gloucester-road, was this day week. You know, ma'am, we have two of them 'talian greyhounds, and you yourself calls them Ninon the Wise and Folly the Foolish,—well, I opened the gate to see if I could see the milk coming down the road, and to keep Folly in, I lifts her in my arms, when she takes a flying leap after the tollman's magpie, when up he sidles—"

"Who? the magpie, cook?"

"No, ma'am, the Poleese; 'Don't agitate yourself, good woman,' he says, 'the weather's too warm for agitation, stand still, and call the little beast: you'll never catch her.' 'Do your duty,' I says, 'you're long and lane enough to catch a dragon-fly, let alone a 'talian greyhound,—'baste,' indeed!—I only wish I had the basting of you! and how dare you call me "good woman"? I says, for I was struck dumb by his impudence, and hadn't a word in my head; and with that, before I could draw my breath, he takes off his hat, that isn't a hat, but a 'shiney,' and says, 'I ask your pardon, I did not intend to call you out of your name.' Oh, didn't

I wish for a stone in a stocking, and him and me on the fair green of Ballynarent!"

Now this was a hasty admission on the part of our excellent cook, which she would not have made in cold blood. It is by no means an uncommon thing to find *Irishmen* in that, or indeed I am sorry to say, in any class of life, stammer and fidget, and look confused, when you intimate that they are natives of the Green Isle; and I am ashamed to confess that I often meet with *Irish gentlemen*, who, if they do not deny their country, are too ready to deal it a vigorous kick, as if by spurning the land of their birth they elevate themselves; but not so with *Irish-women*: their eyes sparkle, and their cheeks flush, and their sweet voices (none the less sweet for the intoning their enemies call "brogue") speak out frankly what they feel and believe—that with all her faults, there is no country in the world to be compared to their own "darling Ireland." I reverence that love of native land. I need not tell my readers, young or old, to what country our cook belonged; you could not hear the sound of her voice, you could not look into her soft grey eyes fringed by long black lashes, you could not experience her desire to oblige, no matter at what personal sacrifice, without knowing at once that she was a daughter of the "Emerald Isle." Every one said she was too handsome for a cook, but what was better, she was a grateful and affectionate servant, ready, as she declared, at any time "to go to the world's end through fire and water to serve me or mine." That I did not require, but I should have been glad, if she had put things in their right places, and did not make a flat-iron do duty as a door-weight, and oblige the door-weight to act as a coal-hammer: the housemaid once declared she made her bed with the fire-shovel—that was a libel. But the remarkable thing about our cook was her stoutly denying she was *Irish*:—"Irish! she had no call to them, her grandfather indeed might have been born there, or her grandmother, but that did not make *her* *Irish*, she hated the very sound of the brogue!" After such a declaration, she was particularly careful to call plates "plets," liping her words as finely as her own mincing-machine minced

meat: it was very sad and very wrong to tell that untruth, more especially as the genuine love of her country would break forth naturally. Sometimes she would come to me with a tale of Irish distress which brought tears into her fine grey eyes, and apologize in this way:—"Sure, the craythurs are in such misery, that my heart aches fit to breaking, at the way they're in; and you, madam, are so fond of *your own country people*, that though I have no call to the Irish, I thought *you* would like to know the trouble that's on them." There is a strong prejudice against Irish servants in England, but that was no excuse for cook's untruth; it was *the blot* in her character.

I was always glad to catch her tripping on this subject, and the allusion to the mode of warfare practised on "the fair green of Ballynatrent," was evidence of country so decided, that, very maliciously, I asked her to tell me "where the fair green of Ballynatrent was situated," upon which she blushed and turning away answered,—

"It's a place I heard tell of *once*, ma'am dear—a place, and its ways, my grandmother often discoursed about; but sure any place would do, if I could only get a good throw at him, the lazy sneering scamp;" adding "and now, if you please, I'll go on with my trouble:—

"All this time, Folly was leaping her heart out after that ugly Mag, that kept on whistling with its eye cocked on the top of the great toll-board. Ninon the Wise, who well knew the differ between her master's whistle, and the whistle of a Brompton magpie, stood as grave as a judge inside the rails. At the minute, a cart came out of the great gate at Eagle Lodge, and my heart was in my mouth, for I saw no escape for Folly, and I could have spitted the *poleeseman* as I would a goose, and he standing twisting a straw in his mouth.

"Can't you run?" I says, "and not see the dog massacred in the sight of your eyes? what's the like of you for?" I says; I could not stir, for all the breath was gone out of my body, and my heart leaping like a fish after a fly. Well! the words were taken out of my mouth as much as the breath, I may say, by seeing Ninon, the stately creature, make one bound like a stag across the road, and seize Folly by the 'scruff' of her neck, from among the horses' feet, and drop her inside the gate, and the magpie whistling all the time, not caring if the poor foolish dumb animal had been scrunched under the cart wheels; and if she had, I'd have wrung the head off her, or my name's not Mary Ogremen!"

Here was a tangle! Mary Ogremen, our rosy cook, two Italian greyhounds, a magpie, and a policeman, all about a yard-dog!

"And what did the policeman say to Ninon's sagacity?"

"Well, I don't know, ma'am; I don't think he understood it at once, only his two eyes grew like the bull's eye of his own lantern, and he standin' in the middle of the road, until the carter cries, 'Lave the way, will ye, or I'll be over you as well as the dog,' and he not over the dog at all! who was squealing and grumbling at her presarver, like many

a one else in the world, who don't know when they are sarved or saved. But what put me past myself intirely, was that more than two hours after, as I was hindering the white sauce from coming to a *bile*, a tattering ring shakes the back gate. I thought it was the Wenham Lake, which runs to waste before you can look round you, so I takes my sauce in my fist, and makes a rush at the gate, and sorra a thing was there, but that aggravating poleeseman. "I beg your pardon, madam" (that was his word), 'madam' he says, 'but I am curious to know if the big thin dog is mother to the little thin one.' I don't know how I kept the sauce off him, the great onadawa, and me so busy!"

"What a good, wise creature that Ninon is," I exclaimed; "another reason, Mary, why we should not have a yard-dog."

"Oh, as you please, ma'am," said cook, exchanging the air narrative, for the air dignified, and preparing to pass from the verandah to the kitchen; "as you please, ma'am, of course; it's just as you and the master plazes, only if all I've said this very half-minute don't prove what cruel want we are in of a yard-dog, why it don't, that's all! I suppose I must lose mee bits of clothes, and the little property in mee box, the caddy spoon, and punch-lade that belonged to me grate grandfather, who *was* a man! As sure as the sun shines, we shall be all murdered; the dark nights too, and the end of the world so nigh."

I made no answer. Cook lingered, twisting up a refractory honeysuckle, still anxious to carry her point.

"I really do not want any more dogs, cook; it was only yesterday you said 'the house was poisoned with them.'"

"Oh, then, ma'am dear, sure I don't want another *in* the house, only outside, to pucter the property. Sure, I've shown you this very minute, how exposed the corner and stable is, and the *poleese* dear at a brass farthing a piece! and that whistling magpie, distracting one's mind with its nonsense, and the carts going the road, as if it belonged to them, and that poor darlin' Ninon obleeged to take police duty on herself, or see her comrade massacred."

"And is a yard-dog to cure all these unpleasantnesses, cook?"

"Oh, ma'am, if it's laughing at me ye are, I'm done; I'll say to Hatchment, 'Don't talk to me about your dog, sir, if you please, though you have been so good as to offer her to my mistress, and she such a wonderful watch.'"

"No, Mary," I interrupted, with admirable gravity, "I am by no means a good watch."

"You, ma'am! oh, ma'am dear, sure I never evened the like of that to you,—you indeed!"

"You have just said I was a wonderful watch."

"I'd not contradict you, ma'am, but if the words came out of my mouth, it was not me that said them; it was Hatchment's dog Bizz, the baste, I meant was the watch, and a wonderful watch intirely she certainly is—by all accounts."

"I am very glad to hear it."