

"Ah, whisht! Whisht will you! I have something here to give you an appetite."

The old man swung the heavy kettle onto the chain over the open fire, and the dog sat up, shaking his ears with an expression of the deepest interest. The policeman unbuttoned his tunic, opened his belt, took a pipe and a plug of tobacco from his breast pocket, and, crossing his legs in an easy posture, began to cut the tobacco slowly and carefully with his penknife. The old man went to the dresser and took down two handsomely decorated cups, the only cups he had, which, though chipped and handleless, were used at all only on very rare occasions; for himself he preferred his tea from a basin. Happening to glance into them, he noticed they bore signs of disuse and had collected a lot of the fine, white turf dust that always circulated in the little smoky cottage. Again he thought of the shirt, and, rolling up his sleeves with a stately gesture, he wiped them inside and out till they shone. Then he bent and opened the cupboard. Inside was a quart bottle of pale liquid, obviously untouched. He removed the cork and smelt the contents, pausing for a moment in the act as though to recollect where exactly he had noticed that particular smoky smell before. Then, reassured, he stood up and poured out with a liberal hand.

"Try that now, Segeant" he said proudly.

The sergeant, concealing whatever qualms he might have felt at the idea of drinking illegal whisky, looked carefully into the cup, sniffed, and glanced up at old Dan.

"It looks good", he commented.

"It should be good", replied Dan.

"It tastes good too", said the sergeant.

"Ah, sha" said Dan, not wishing to praise his own hospitality in his own house,

"'tis of no great excellence."

"You'd be a good judge, I'd say" said the sergeant without irony.

"Ever since things became what they are" said Dan, carefully guarding himself against a too direct reference in the peculiarities of the law administered by his guest, "it isn't what it used to be"

"I've heard that remark made before now" said the sergeant. "I've heard it said by men of wide experience that it used to be better in the old days."

"Liquor" said Dan "is a thing that takes

time. Never a good job done in a hurry."

"'Tis an art ' takes time and knowledge" said Dan. "Every art has its secrets, and the secrets of distilling are being lost the way the old songs were lost. When I was a boy there wasn't a man in the barony but had a hundred songs in his head but with people rushing about the songs were lost."

"There must have been a power of them"

"There was. Ask any man today that makes whisky do he know how to make it out of heather" said Dan. "I never drank it myself but knew old men that did and said non nowadays could compare with it."

"Musha, Dan, I think sometimes 'twas a great mistake of the law to set against it. Dan shook his head. His eyes answered for him, but is not in nature for a man to criticize the occupation of a guest.

The sergeant would not be outdone in generosity. Politeness required him not to yield to the old man silence.

"It is the secrets I'd be sorry for" said Dan, "Men die and men are born, and where one man drained another will plough, but a secret lost is lost forever."

"True," said the sergeant "Lost Forever."

Dan took his cup, rinsed it and cleaned it with the shirt. Then he placed it at the sergeant's elbow. From the dresser he took milk and a bag of sugar; his he followed up with a slab of butter and a sure sign he had expected a visitor—a round cake of homemade bread, fresh and uncut. The kettle sang and he made the tea, filled the two cups. The sergeant cut himself a large slice of bread and buttered it thickly.

"It is just like medicines", said the old man, resuming his theme with the imperturbability of age. "Every secret there was is lost, and leave no one tell me that a doctor is as good a man as one that had the secrets of old times."

"How could he be?" asked the sergeant with his mouth full.

"The proof of that was seen when there was doctors and wise people together." "It wasn't to the doctors the people went, I'll engage?"

"It was not, and why?" With a sweeping gesture the old man took in the whole world outside his cabin. "Out there on the hillsides is the sure cure for every disease. Because it is written" - he tapped with his thumb - "it is written by the poets 'wherever you find the disease you