

Mr. Garfinkel and the Lepra-Cohen

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It's embarrassing to be in debt - but to be indebted to the extent of granting your benefactor a pot of gold is even worse... especially if you've forgotten how!

Mr. Samuel Garfinkel gasped, jerked his foot off the accelerator, jammed on the brake, swung the car sharply to the right and then almost instantly back again. There was a squealing of brakes, a scraping of tires on the road and then the car was back in the right lane (the right lane was the left lane, of course, for this was happening in Ireland), and Mr. Garfinkel put his foot cautiously on the gas pedal.

"Mesliugah Irisher!" he muttered, half aloud. "He should drop right away dead from fright!" He glanced back through the rear view mirror and saw the object of his imprecations emerging again onto the road. The said object was one of those incredibly small, dried up old Irishmen who seems to grow smaller and drier every year of his life, he had appeared suddenly from the row of trees that lined the road, dazed and panic-stricken, directly in the beam of light from Mr. Garfinkel's car. And now, while Mr. Garfinkel's heart was still in his mouth, the little man was again essaying the crossing of the road, still as dazed and panic-stricken as ever.

"If he lives yet the night out, I'll be surprised," said Mr. Garfinkel, and turned his attention to the road ahead, attempting to put the incident out of his mind. But in this case, out of sight was definitely not out of mind. Mr. Garfinkel reached his goal—the home of Mr. Timothy O'Shaughnessy, the manufacturer of world-famous Irish tweeds.

All through the excellent supper the incident annoyed him, and it wasn't until he and Mr. O'Shaughnessy were chatting over their drinks that he suddenly remembered—when he had glanced into his rearview mirror to see the little Irishman emerging again onto the road, his eye had caught the distant gleam of approaching headlights. Without a doubt, another car had been bearing down on the little stranger. Mr. Garfinkel said, "Oy!" and choked on his whiskey and soda.

"Did I make it a bit too strong, then?" asked Mr. O'Shaughnessy, solicitously.

"It's not the whiskey," answered Mr. Garfinkel in a tone that corresponded to his sudden pallor. "It's just—I just remembered something." He gulped down the remainder of his drink and spent the moment Mr. O'Shaughnessy refilled his glass regaining his poise.

"I had it, a shock, driving over here," he explained as he sipped at the refilled glass. "A little fellow jumped out of the woods onto the road and I almost hit him. And I just remembered that as he started out onto the road again, after I passed, another car was coming."

"Holy Christopher protect him," said Mr. O'Shaughnessy, piously. "But who would be leaping out of the woods like a boogie, after dark? What sort of a fellow was he, now?"

"Little he was," said Mr. Garfinkel. "A dwarf, he should be in a circus, yet. He had it a scrubby white beard, and ten million wrinkles. A nil I think he had on an apron, like."

"Now that!" exclaimed Mr. O'Shaughnessy, evincing some interest. "That would be none of the neighbors that I know. But be like 'twas one o' the little men — a leprechaun, perhaps — by the apron, I'd say 'twas a leprechaun."

"Lepra-cohen?" asked Mr. Garfinkel, with curiosity in his tone. "This fellow is Jewish, maybe?"

"Not that I ever heard tell," answered his host with a ghost of a smile. "Leprechaun it is, and the little people have lived in old Ireland for many a year. 'Tis the fairies I'm speaking of."

"Oh, the Fairies!" said Mr. Garfinkel, loftily. "Don't tell me there's grown up people in Ireland what still believes it, there's fairies?"

"Whisht, now," Mr. O'Shaughnessy replied, in a sharp stage-whisper. "Don't you be airing your skepticism around here. This is Ireland, and the wee ones little like to hear of them that doubt them. And faith, there's things that happen here on the sod that could never happen beyond, at all, at all. And how explain it all, save by the little folk?"

"And what then is this lepra-cohen?" asked Mr. Garfinkel. "He's supposed to be one of these little fellows?"

"Supposed to be?" A twinkle of enthusiasm came into Mr. O'Shaughnessy's eyes. "Faith, he is one, and one of the most important, too. The fairy shoemaker, he is, and what with the dances on the green and the dances under the hill, the poor little creature is overworked, entirely, fixing the slippers the fairies wear out.

"But small worry is on him for that, for they pay well, the fairy court, and there's never a leprechaun yet that didn't have a pot of gold hidden away somewhere, his savings against a rainy day in Tir-na-shee. Which the same is Fairyland, saving your grace. And they do say—" Mr. O'Shaughnessy paused impressively and refilled his glass—"They do say that if you catch a leprechaun and hold him tight, 'tis the bounden law of the little people that he must give you up his pot of gold."

"A shame I didn't stop my car and go chasing after this fellow," said Mr. Garfinkel with more than a trace of sarcasm in his voice.

"Well, now," said Mr. O'Shaughnessy, judiciously. "You being a foreigner and all that, 'twould perhaps have been of little use for you to attempt to catch him. For, you see, 'tis weird powers the wee people have on them, and if you try to hold a leprechaun, sure, he takes the form of a snake, or a raging lion or a fish or whatever, and before you know it you've dropped him, and whisht!— he's off."

Mr. Garfinkel finished his drink, shook his head negatively at Mr. O'Shaughnessy's offer of another, and lit one of the big fat cigars he liked so well. He offered one to Mr. O'Shaughnessy but that worthy preferred his pipe. A rather strained silence fell over them, ended at last when they returned to the discussion of business.

Now, this Mr. Samuel Garfinkel was the junior partner of the firm of Bromley and Stokes, exclusive English custom-tailors. His senior partner, Mr. Theodore Murphy, usually made an annual trip to Ireland, where he purchased from Mr. O'Shaughnessy a series of fine Irish woolens which, made up into suits by the partners, had gained them fame and fortune.

However, this year, Mr. Murphy's health had been such that he had been unable to make the trip. He had insisted that Mr. Garfinkel go, so, to keep Mr. Murphy in a good mood, Mr. Garfinkel sailed to Ireland, leaving Mr. Murphy digging and planting flowers in his back yard, an exercise his doctor, for some reason, approved of. Everything had gone unexpectedly well and now the deal with Mr. O'Shaughnessy was all complete, and the Irishman had invited Mr. Garfinkel to his home for a farewell supper.

So at last, about midnight, the brief stiffness in their relations was forgotten, Mr. Garfinkel bade his host farewell and started the drive back to Dublin. On the morrow, he would take the train for Cobb, and sail again to the land of his adoption.

As he approached the place where he had so narrowly avoided striking the little Irishman, the uneasiness that had affected him all evening in-creased ten fold. He slowed down, afraid that he might see, any minute, an uncertain form rush out from the trees. When he finally reached the place where the accident had nearly occurred, he had slowed down to about eight or ten miles-an-hour and moved along, his eyes darting from one side of the road to the other.

Then suddenly he saw it—the huddled little figure that his presentiment had told him might be there. He stopped the car and leaped out and in a moment he had the head of the little Irishman cradled in his arms. He gazed in amazement at the little figure which he could see by the lights of his car, and a wave of credulousness swept over him.

For the little man really was little — not four feet in height—and his face was so wrinkled that it seemed impossible that a man might get so wrinkled in one lifetime. And he was dressed in the manner of a bygone day, and as Mr. Garfinkel looked at the knee-length pants, the tricorne hat and the buckled shoon, he knew

that Mr. O'Shaughnessy was right.

"A lepra-cohen!" breathed Mr. Garfinkel. "A leather apron, he's got it! With knickers and a George Washington hat, yet, and here's a shoemaker's hammer in his belt. Oy!"

What was he to do about it? Fate had tossed him what could be a fortune—what was it Mr. O'Shaughnessy had said? It was almost impossible to hold a leprechaun, they changed shape so fast — But this one was unconscious—then what should a fellow do?

Mr. Garfinkel sighed. This little fellow was hurt. Maybe he was a leprechaun----so, and maybe he wasn't— but he was hurt and he needed a doctor. So. quick. he had better get him to town. With a warm sympathy that was characteristic of the gentleman, Mr. Garfinkel gathered the little form up and carried it to the car. With the frugal and business-like carefulness that were characteristic of many of his race, he lay him down on the front seat and kept a tight grip on his wrist as he started the car and drove off with only one hand on the wheel.

It was nearly two o'clock when Mr. Garfinkel drove up to the little hotel where he had been staying on Mr. O'Shaughnessy's recommendation, and the drowsing old clerk scarcely raised his head as Mr. Garfinkel carried the little form past him and up the stairs to the second floor. He had a little trouble getting his keys out, but the unconscious one had not yet begun to get heavy. When he lay him down on his bed, Mr. Garfinkel felt the little fellow all over and was relieved to find no sign of broken bones.

"Might be he's got it, internal injuries," said Mr. Garfinkel to him-self, "but he looks at least more peaceful now. Maybe he's not hurt so bad after all."

The little man groaned softly and Mr. Garfinkel leaned forward and began to stroke the small one's head awkwardly. Thus it was that he found the injury that had brought the leprechaun to this pass—was a huge, bloody-clotted hump just above the left ear.

With an ejaculation of concern, Mr. Garfinkel rose and hastened to the water bowl, where he wet a towel and returned to wash the wound, after which he smeared it with a sulfa salve from his traveler's kit and bound it to the best of his ability.

"He'll need it, a doctor, in the morning," he muttered, "but I guess this will do for the night."

He fixed himself a highball, glad to be able to taste something more to his fancy than Mr. O'Shaughnessy's whisky and soda, and returned to study the form of his "fairy." As he did so, the little man opened his eyes and stared blankly at him.

Mr. Garfinkel dropped his glass and before it had time to crash to the floor, he had the little fellow gripped by a wrist and an ankle. He flung himself onto the bed and sat there and panted, while the little man lay and looked at him with a dazed blank wonder growing in his eyes. A moment passed and then another, and still the two sat unmoving; Mr. Garfinkel's eyes sharp and watchful as a hawk's, the others with dull, un-comprehending amazement.

"So commence!" commanded Mr. Garfinkel, at last. "A lion you should be, or maybe a snake—or might be a gorilla or an alligator—but commence and get it over with."

"The—top of the morning to you, your worship," came slowly from the little man's lips. "'Tis a bit of an accident I've been after having, I think, and my mind's that dazed, I can hardly tell the words you have on you. What was that about a lion you were saying, now?"

Mr. Garfinkel had a sudden feeling of misgiving. This little fellow didn't even know what he was talking about. So much for Mr. O'Shaughnessy's nonsense about fairies and such. What on earth had made Mr. Garfinkel so credulous, tonight. Was it O'Shaughnessy's drinks or his clever Irish blarney?

And yet— What man of today could be expected to wear such clothes—

"Look once," said Mr. Garfinkel. "Are you a lepra-cohen or ain't you? Tonight, a friend tells me for the first time about shoemaker fairies, and to-night I find you. You sure look to me like a lepra-cohen."

"Leprechaun?" whispered the little old man. "Leprechaun, is it. Sure, now, that's plain enough. Yes, a leprechaun I am, and my name's Mallory, but saving them two facts, there's devil a thing I can remember at all, at all."

Mr. Garfinkel's right hand released the fairy's ankle and smote his brow. "Gevalt!" he prayed. "Here I've got it a real Irisher fairy—with a pot of gold waiting for me, already—and the good-for-nothing schnorrer has to get it amnesia!"

For a moment, he stood motionless, stricken with the tragedy, then he moved away from the leprechaun and sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Now, Mr. Garfinkel, as the discerning reader has already no doubt observed, was in somewhat more than a predicament. Mr. Garfinkel was in what he would probably have described as a "pickle." He had in his possession, as it were, a genuine leather-bound Irish leprechaun, with pot of gold presumably attached, and only slightly damaged by temporary amnesia. So far, so good. But—

But he was scheduled to leave Ireland in a little over forty hours. If he held on to the fairy, he'd apparently have to lug him right across the sea with him. If he didn't—there went a pot of gold, right out the window. If he called a doctor for him, the obvious thing to do, they'd certainly take his leprechaun away from him to put him in a hospital—and goodbye, fortune. If he took him to America with him, dodging the doctors and the hospitals and going through the incredible mess of red tape at the immigration offices, and then the little Irishman turned out to be just a little Irishman, and no fairy at all—oy, veh!

All night long Mr. Garfinkel pondered and all night long, little Mallory dozed on his bed and let him ponder, and when morning came, Mr. Garfinkel had made his decision. He would take Mallory to America with him and leave the rest to fate.

In the next few days, Mr. Garfinkel was going through a series of events that might have completely ruined his disposition, had there been any distractions. The little man remained quiet and unconcerned and quite amenable to Mr. Garfinkel's every suggestion. His wants, even, were amazingly few, he asked only for bread and milk now and then, and once or twice a little tobacco for his pipe. Mr. Garfinkel, that first night, broke up a couple of his cigars to provide this tobacco, and the little fellow was so pleased with the Havana aroma that Mr. Garfinkel found it necessary, from then on, to buy about twice as many as was his habit.

There is much that could be told about Mr. Garfinkel's difficulties in clearing Mallory for transportation to America, but the narration of these events was inconsequential with what was to follow.

So! Mr. Garfinkel was seated in the ship's lounge, working on the last details of his plan to get Mallory into America. If things went smoothly, he'd be able to get a Visitor's visa on Mallory's passport after which the little man would be allowed three month's residence in the country. Of course, there were bound to be a lot of questions asked, and it was the answers to these questions that were occupying Mr. Garfinkel's thoughts. At last, satisfied that he was letter perfect in the story, he arose and made his way to his cabin. He reached the door and before he could open it, he was startled by an incomprehensible yowling that came from within. He swung the door open and shouted for Mallory.

"Sure, it's here I am, your worship," came a muffled voice, hardly discernable in the tumult of caterwauling, "and almost smothered I am, entirely. Would ye be saving me now from these infernal cats before they crush me complete?"

The last part of the sentence Mr. Garfinkel hardly heard, for he had almost gone down in a rush of house cats that poured from his cabin. Such a collection of feline animals it had never been his misfortune to behold before. There were Persian cats, Angora cats, Siamese cats, Maltese cats, black cats, gray cats, red cats and white cats. There were fancy cats, probably pedigreed, alley cats, old maid's cats, tortoise shell cats, tiger cats and hep cats. They had but one thing in common, a wild desire to get out of Mr. Garfinkel's cabin. For a moment, Mr. Garfinkel ducked cats and swore in mellifluous Yiddish. Then, the feline hegira being reasonably complete, he waded into the room and towered over the still prostrate Mallory.

"So where you're getting cats?" he demanded of the little man. "Where you're getting cats, I'm asking. These you're not bringing on board in the suitcase, I know."

"Saving your grace, your worship," began the leprechaun. "Saving your grace, they weren't mine. Devil

and all do I know about them at all, now. One minute this room was as empty of cats as Finnegan's heart was of grace—and the next minute, I'm spitting cats out of my mouth and toss-ing them off of myself, and more cats were dropping like rain all around.”

Mr. Garfinkel's hands went to his head in a vain attempt to tear the hair which wasn't there.

“Don't tell me!” he snapped as he watched the last cat disappear out the cabin door. “A magicker you are—a fairy, already! You think maybe some passenger is bringing maybe a hundred cats aboard, he should play a joke on me and you?”

Mallory groaned and took a pose like Mr. Garfinkel, his head in his hands. The two sat there for a while, while strange sounds—the squeals of women, the curses and ejaculations of men and a vast amount of caterwauling—came from the deck outside of their cabin. The cats were apparently causing as much excitement outside as they had in the cabin. Mr. Garfinkel groaned in anticipation of what was to come and Mallory groaned in sympathy.

“'Twas strange, now that I think on it,” said the little man at last.

“So what's strange?” demanded Mr. Garfinkel in bitter sarcasm. “By me is lots of times a hundred cats. I'm keeping them in the pockets of my other suit. It's nothing strange a hundred cats should jump out. I for-got to feed them this morning, that's all.”

“Is it so now?” commented the leprechaun, innocently. “But I wasn't talking of that. What I was thinking on was something else entirely. You see, just before the cats broke loose, I was lying here thinking. I was straining my mind to remember something, and sudden-like a bunch of words popped into my head, funny words, all mixed up like. I said them out loud, and as my name's Mallory, that was all them cats needed. 'Twas cats galore and a-pently from that moment on, your worship.”

Mr. Garfinkel got up casually and strolled toward Mallory. He gave a sudden lunge and had the little man by an ankle and a wrist before you could say “Jake Rubenstein.”

“You remembered!” he shouted. “Magic words you remembered Magic words what bring cats! Look, your memory you're getting back. Come on, try and remember some more. Might be you could remember something important. Could you remember, say, something maybe about a pot of gold?”

The little man sat down and pressed his hand to his brow in the attitude of Rodin's “Thinker.” It was a little difficult to do with Mr. Garfinkel holding onto his wrist and ankle, but he managed it. He thought long and diligently, while Mr. Garfinkel cajoled and persuaded. But at last: “It's no use, your worship,” he sighed. “Devil a thought pops into my head. I can't even remember the words that brought the cats.”

So that was that. Of course, they had trouble about the cats, for there was plenty of evidence that the cats had come from Mr. Garfinkel's cabin. There was also plenty of evidence that they couldn't have come from Mr. Garfinkel's cabin, for how can a man smuggle aboard and conceal for several days in a small ship's cabin— one hundred house-cats? So Mr. Garfinkel was cleared of the “crime” but he was looked upon with askance by the passengers for the rest of the trip.

The trip, save for the passengers' unspoken suspicions, proved unevent-ful. For a day or so, Mr. Garfinkel kept a mighty close watch on the little Mallory, but that strange little man remained for the most of the time in the cabin, sitting in thoughtful pose with one hand wrapped around the bowl of his pipe, which he smoked continually. Only rarely did he speak, a brief “Thank you.” after each meal, or a request for a match, or some thing as inconsequential. When he wasn't in the cabin, he was seated in a deck chair just outside of the cabin, with his hand around his pipe and the same puzzled, faraway look in his eyes.

And so they came to New York, and the luck of the Irish seemed to be with Mr. Garfinkel now, for they passed like a breeze through the im-migration offices and, armed with a visitor's visa for Mallory, they came at last to Mr. Garfinkel's home.

Up to now, Mr. Garfinkel had been carried along by an unnoticed cur-rent of excitement. The adventures in Ireland, getting Mallory out, the plotting and planning to assure his entrance into this country, the adven-ture of the cats and the doings at the immigration offices had kept his mind busy. Now Mallory was installed as a guest in his apartment, and day followed day and nothing happened. At the tailor shop, he

found that Murphy was still too ill to attend business regularly, and it became necessary for Mr. Garfinkel to spend a part of every day at the shop. Mr. Murphy was thankful that Mr. Garfinkel was back and gave up appearing at the shop at all. He spent all of his time at home, presumably continuing his eternal dig-ging and planting in his garden. As day followed day and nothing happened, Mr. Garfinkel's temper began to shorten.

Mr. Garfinkel returned home from the store one day, early as usual, for he didn't like to be away from home and Leprechaun any longer than possible. As he stood in the hall outside of his apartment and prepared to put the key in the door, he was startled by a most inhuman grunt that came from within the apartment. Mr. Garfinkel shuddered and froze into immobility. That grunt, incredible as it must seem, coming from Mr. Garfinkel's rooms, had been an "oink." "Oink" in Mr. Garfinkel's apartment! It was several seconds before Mr. Garfinkel could move, then he unlocked the door and hurled it open.

His worst fears were realized. In the center of the living room lay a huge sow and six contented small pigs. Lying back in Mr. Garfinkel's favorite lounge chair, Mallory puffed his pipe and regarded the group with a look of beatific happiness on his face.

Mr. Garfinkel's usual bass-baritone "Oy!" failed him completely. It came out as a shrill falsetto, "lyiyiyiy!" and then he had Mallory by the scruff of the neck and was shaking him.

"For this, I'm bringing you to America," he shouted. "For this, Pin healing your head and feeding you bread and milk, and cheese, already. For this, I'm breaking up my cigars to fill that rotten pipe of yours. Schnorrer! Gonif! Schlemiel!

He might have struck the little fellow, but Mallory had a look on his face that made Mr. Garfinkel, angry as he was, hesitate. The little man didn't look angry, he didn't even look indignant, his look was one of astonishment. Mr. Garfinkel, instead of hitting him, held him up by his shirt collar and snarled:

"So what you got to say for yourself, hah? Get them—them things out of here, quick, yet. Get them out the same way you got 'em in."

Mallory made a quick, peculiar gesture with his finger and lo! the pigs were gone. Mr. Garfinkel slowly released him and he stood there, his head hanging down, looking for all the world like a whipped dog.

"Your pardon, your worship," he whispered. "I thought I was doing you a favor."

"Favor, schmavor!" snapped Mr. Garfinkel, his words expressing a whole world of disgust. He stood there, saying nothing more, and the little leprechaun cringed lower and lower until Mr. Garfinkel almost expected him to crawl on the floor.

"You see," whined the little man apologetically. "I think my memory has begun to come back. I sat here and I remembered Ireland, and the people there; I thought of the homes arid, sure, they had a pig in the parlor, if so be they had the price of one. Then I thought, here's my dear friend, and devil a pig he has, not even a little one. With that, another bunch of funny words popped into my head, and me dying to say them out loud, so I said them—and so help me, your worship, there was the pigs. How I done it at all, I'll never know."

So there it was and what was Mr. Garfinkel to do? The cats had been a trial to him, for he was a man who liked friendly company and the suspicious glances of the ship's passengers had bothered him. But the cats were peaches and cream compared with this latest development of Mallory's latent talents. Mr. Garfinkel sat and thought for a long time, and then he locked the unprotesting leprechaun in the bathroom and took a taxi out to the house of Mr. Murphy, his partner. Mr. Garfinkel had decided that an Irish fairy who was liable to get his memory back at any moment was just a little too much to tackle alone. He needed help, and his Irish partner was just the man to help him.

Mr. Murphy, as might have been suspected, was pattering about in his garden, digging a little here and planting a little there. It was Mr. Murphy's only money-losing venture, which Garfinkel frowned upon. He welcomed Mr. Garfinkel and they went inside and sat down.

"A queer thing, I'm going to tell you, Murphy," began Mr. Garfinkel. "If I'm telling this to any ordinary fellow, he'd be thinking for sure that I'm a candidate already for the laughing academy, but you're Irish and so—"

He launched into an account of his capture of and subsequent tribulations with the leprechaun. He recounted Mr. O'Shaughnessy's beliefs and of his own troubles getting Mallory out of Ireland. He told of the cats, and then, after some hesitation, of the pigs. He hesitated after that, for he realized that a humorous smile was playing about Mr. Murphy's lips, then the smile broke into a laugh.

"Sure, I never thought you had such a superstitious nature on you," chuckled Mr. Murphy. "What a devil of a time the little fellow's been having with you and all."

"What you mean?" queried Mr. Garfinkel with a shiver. "You think maybe this fellow ain't no lepra-cohen at all?"

"Why, Garfinkel, is it no sense you have with you at au?" Mr. Murphy shook his head in amazement at Garfinkel's credulity. "Man, there's no fairies, in Ireland or elsewhere. Snap out of it, Sam. You've been taken in by some slick little beggar, who was content to sit tight and let you believe 'whatever you wanted, so long as he got three squares a day and tobacco for his pipe. And a clever job he's done of it, too."

Mr. Garfinkel felt sick. "But the pigs," he groaned . . . "and the cats."

"Sure, I don't know how he did it," Mr. Murphy made answer, "but I've seen Blackstone, and Thurston, and Harry Kellar in the old days, and the way they carry on, 'twould be nothing for an Irish beggar to imitate them. He did what you say, I suppose, and that's enough for me. I'll believe what you say—but 'ghosties and ghoulies' and banshees and leprechauns—those are tales for old wives and young childer."

Mr. Garfinkel sat immobile. It was as if a cold breeze was blowing through his mind and sweeping doz-ens of thoughts out that had crowded it for days. At last, he rose.

"I guess I'll be going, Murphy," he said slowly. "I guess I've been the crazy one for the last month. I'll throw the schnorrer out when I get home. Let him get back to Ireland the best way he can."

Mr. Murphy's chuckles ceased. A speculative look came into his eyes.

"That's the right idea, Sam," he said. "And now, I want to bring up another subject. We've been partners for a good many years, and we've al-ways had good luck in all our dealings. Have you ever thought of enlarging our partnership a bit—maybe fixing it up so that we'd be partners mall of our financial dealings?"

Mr. Garfinkel was a little surprised. He had spoken several times about this idea, for neither he nor Mr. Murphy had any near relatives and he had thought this a good idea for a long while. He said:

"You know, Murphy, I've wanted it should be this way for several years, now..."

"That's fine, then," exclaimed Mr. Murphy. "I'll be calling in my chauffeur and the housekeeper for wit-nesses, and we'll draw up a paper that'll be nice and legal until the lawyers can fix up something proper."

"A regular enthusiasm you've got it, all of a sudden," said Mr. Garfinkel, with just a trace of suspicion. "What's causing this sudden excitement you should get this done so quick-like?"

"Well, true now, I haven't made my mind up all of a sudden," said Mr. Murphy in his most dignified tone. "But when Teddy Murphy finally decides a thing, he wants it done as soon as possible."

Mr. Garfinkel might have been sus-picious, just a bit. He had just fin-ished telling Mr. Murphy of his expectations of a pot of gold, and here was Mr. Murphy, eager to be the partner of Mr. Garfinkel in all things. Yes, he might have been just a tiny bit suspicious, but he quelled his suspicions and let Mr. Murphy call in the witnesses.

"But remember," cautioned Garfinkel, "we are partners only in business. My private property, as is yours, does not enter the deal. Your losses in your gardening I do not share."

They drew up and signed the paper and had a drink to its success. Then, Mr. Garfinkel bade Mr. Murphy adieu.

"And throw the little bum out when you get home, Sam," advised Mr. Murphy, as he made his final farewell. "There's never been a fairy in old Ireland in spite of what superstitious people say, but the cleverest

beggars in all the world were always Irish.”

One can hardly blame Mr. Garfinkel for being down-hearted as he wended his way homeward. He had come to know that his partner's word was good and sound in all his busi-ness dealings, and the fact that Mr. Murphy was ten years older than he increased his tendency to take Mr. Murphy's word. So he entered his apartment with a heavy heart and looked around anxiously before he remembered that he had left Mallory locked in the bathroom. He opened his bathroom door and came face to face with a six foot alligator, reared up on its hind legs!

For a moment—no, for a second— Mr. Garfinkel stared, dumbfounded. Then his thoughts clicked into place, he realized what had happened and he leaped at the animal in a flying tackle that would have done credit to whatever famous football tackle your mind happens to recall. Mr. Garfinkel was no coward, and the realization of the reward that might be his spurred him on.

He caught the reptile around the waist with one arm, and ducked his head under the gaping jaws to thrust upward thus closing the jowls. He heaved upward, ignoring the lashing tail; the alligator lost its balance and went over backward, and Mr. Garfinkel tumbled on top of the creature, which lay flat on its back and squirmed. Mr. Garfinkel said “Oy!” then he immediately said “Ouch!” and almost jerked his hand from the sharp, prickly quills of the porcupine which had taken the place of the alligator. The thing tried to wiggle away from him, but a swift shift enabled our hero to get a grip on the tail and one forepaw, which he held onto like grim death.

The front paw dissolved in his grip, and if he hadn't had a good grip on the tail, he would have lost his leprechaun entirely, for the third shape had no front legs nor hind ones either. It seemed to be a snake of some kind, and Mr. Garfinkel's free hand barely had time to grab it by the neck. As he did so, he was jolted from hair to toe nails by an electric shock that ran through him, a shock that was so violent it froze every muscle in his body. He cried out in agony, but he didn't—he couldn't— let the electric eel go.

The creature slithered and squirmed, but Mr. Garfinkel held on. Then the eel was gone and Mr. Garfinkel leaped upon the little mouse that tried to dart from under his recumbent form. He caught the mouse by the neck and one leg and rose again to his feet. No sooner had he so than it changed again, this time to a baby—badly in need of a change.

Mr. Garfinkel was a bachelor and crying babies were a horror to him, as they are to most men who have reached the age of forty without attaining fatherhood. This particular crying baby was a horror which achieved the heights of horror. Mr. Garfinkel turned his head away and held on like grim death.

A tiny voice said “Whisht!” and Mr. Garfinkel looked around in sur-prise. The baby's face had hanged into Mallory's own, and it winked solemnly as it said in Mallory's own voice, “Wait till you see this next one.” The baby began to change again, and Mr. Garfinkel realized with a groan that Mallory had remembered the events which transpired earlier in the day. The baby followed the precept laid down by the Duchess' baby in “Alice in Wonderland,” and became a pig... a greased pig!... with lard greased already!

Mr. Garfinkel groaned, opened his befouled hands and the pig was gone... and the baby was gone... and Mallory, the leprechaun was gone.

Mr. Garfinkel stood in the bath-room and scrubbed at his soiled hands and swore. He swore at Mallory and he swore at himself. He swore at Murphy for raising the doubts in his mind and he swore at O'Shaughnessy for ever starting this business in the first place.

Then a voice said, “So please your worship, I'm back.”

Mr. Garfinkel wheeled and almost fell over with surprise as he faced the leprechaun. He stood speechless, as much with anger as with amaze. The little man stood sheepishly before him, waiting for him to say something.

“So, you schlemiel, you're back,” snorted Mr. Garfinkel at last. “Some more dirt you're getting ready to do to me. Get out, you good-for-nothing!”

“If you please, your worship, I'm on command,” whined the little man, woefully. “'Tis the fairy king him-self is after sending me.”

"Look. With fairies I'm through," Mr. Garfinkel stated. "Get my house out, and stay. Alligators I can stand, and spoiled babies, I can even stand, maybe, but a pig and a greased pig-----Out of my house, you schlemiel!"

"Sure and if you'll listen, your honor— 'Tis the command of the fairy king that I give you another chance. By the bounden law of fairyland, I have to show gratitude for all you've done for me, and by the word of the king, I have to give you one free hold and promise not to turn into a pig."

Mr. Garfinkel eyed him sourly.

"With a fellow from your imagination, that's no gift," he snapped. "Dinosaurs I'd be wrestling with, al-ready, or octopuses, maybe, get out!"

"Sure, now, your worship," Mal-lory's whine grew shrill. "You'll not be getting me in trouble with the fairy king, will you? For, faith, he's a mean man to get riled up, and his anger'll be falling on you, maybe, as well as me. Take your hold now and we'll go on where we left off."

With a snarl, Mr. Garfinkel seized the little man and started to fling him out of the room. Immediately Mallory went into a bewildering series of changes—he was a lion, a snake, an eagle, a fish, a donkey and a dog almost before Mr. Garfinkel could adapt himself to each of the various forms, And then he was Mal-lory again, with a sheepish look on his face.

"You win," he said. "I'll have to tell you where the treasure is buried."

But Mr. Garfinkel was dubious now. It had been too easy. "I still say, get out, you low-lifer. What kind treasure you think I'd take from a pig? Might be you'd show me Fort Knox, or the vaults of the First National Bank. Get out, I don't trust you."

"Now, your worship, take it easy. 'Tis a real treasure I'm after revealing to you. By the hands of Lugh, 'tis so. A genuine box of gold that I know of, not my own, do you see, but a box that was buried during your famous Civil War. It's been lying there all these years and never a soul knowing of it but the little folk, and it's right here in town."

He was arguing eagerly now, and some of his eagerness rubbed off on Mr. Garfinkel. "Come on," said that worthy, "one last chance I'm giving you. Show me where's this treasure."

With a sprightliness that Mr. Gar-finkel had never before seen in him, the little man ran to the door and led Mr. Garfinkel out into the street. Mr. Garfinkel's spirits continued to rise as he was led up one street and down another, through back alleys and across vacant lots until at last they stood before a low brick wall that walled a back yard in from the alley they stood in.

"'Tis over that wall that you'll find the treasure," asserted Mallory, solemnly. "Climb over this wall, right here, and take seven paces from the wall. Dig there and as my name's Mallory of the Hill, you'll find the treasure."

He shook Mr. Garfinkel's hand and vanished.

Mr. Garfinkel looked about him for moment, a perplexed recognition struggling to express itself. The place was familiar, but they had approached it in such an unorthodox manner that he wasn't exactly sure where he was. Then, casting his uncertainty aside, Mr. Garfinkel leaped over the wall and stood—in Mr. Murphy's back yard!

THE END