

From

Shawn-A-Scorb

by Michael Hogan

When Limerick thought of the formation
Of that blest tribe, the Corporation,
The devil's anglers went about
To fish the gipsy trucklers out.
From the back lanes, nooks, alleys, holes,
Human gorillas came in shoals,
To form this heterogeneous school,
And play the scoundrel or the fool.
Of course - like every other sham,
That every day starts up to damn
The hoodwinked people of this realm -
The greatest rascals took the helm.
The burghers all were plucked like geese;
Motions were carried - schemes were spun,
To make a poorhouse of the town.
Places and pensions were in vogue
For every hypocrite and rogue
Who was by interest, tie or blood
Connected with the juggling brood.
Every knave who had a vote,
Equal to a five pound note,
By some reverse of human nature
Became a parish legislator.
Every trafficker and thief
Who loved cash, cauliflowers and beef,
Arose, like balloons charged with gas,
To show the charity of their class.
Blest was the man whose safe election
Hung on the hinge of Church connection;
His promotion was quite sure,
Though the devil stood at the door.
Never, since Nero burned Rome,
And fiddled o'er the city's doom,
Did such a low-sprung base banditti
Humbug, cheat, and curse a city.

"Who shall be Mayor?" a guttural cry
Rang from all sides - "Tis I, tis I!"
Up started every Corporate bear
Howling aloud - "I must be Mayor!"
Then such a riot, rout and rabble,
Since God confused the men of Babel,
Was never seen or heard to roar
On earth's polluted lap before.
Abuse was active - slander plied
Her poison-lance on every side.
With grin and growl, bear leapt on bear,
And buffed, like devils, here and there.
Every grade of huxtering sinners -
Dhudeen-makers, tobacco-spinners;
Boothane retailers, dud-shop screws,
Steeled as the God-abandoned Jews.
Venders of kelp and soap and salt,
Adulterers of meat and malt;
Wholesale corn-mongers great,
As if the world was their estate -

Battled for the Civic Chair,
Each aspiring to be Mayor.
N'er in town or country met
A more rotten, upstart set;
Had Sodom and Gomorrah known them,
Even those curst cities would disown them.

But one bombastic babbler rose
The gipsy turmoil to compose;
A knave who, in his nightly dreams,
Wove and concocted plots and schemes.
As the weather-clock wheels about
To the north, east, west and south,
He wheeled and twisted every way
Where'er his vile self-interest lay;
To-day, a patriot bold and clever,
To-morrow, courting Castle favour:
On every side he slyly set
The meshes of his spider-net.
He loved his country to a letter,
But loved himself, aye, ten times better;
And if he could but fleece or pluck her,
He cared not if the devil took her!

"My friends", he said, "I make a movement,
To your honours an improvement ...
To leave the Mayor's legal sway,
To the next man that comes the way,
O'er Thomond Bridge, from County Clare,
Boor - beggar - let him by our Mayor!"

All that the able speaker hinted,
Seemed very fair, and they consented,
Turning their eyes towards County Clare,
To see who fortune favoured there.
Fortune recorded in her book,
That day, a miracle of good luck;
For, lo, the man whose happy fate,
To rule the town's judicial state,
Came o'er the bridge, in hasty fuss,
From the brown hills of Glounagrass.
A load of brooms, secured with tack,
Lay, like a mountain, on his back:
These to the city he came to sell,
To buy his children milk and meal.
Poor devil, since the day before,
Famine his hungry stomach tore:
Lank, lean and languid was his look,
He groaned at every step he took.
Back on his poll his hat was cocked,
Seeming to curse the day 'twas blocked,
His coat to tattered shreds was gone,
As if a pitch-fork shook it on;
A canvas shift of English spinning,
Substituted Irish linen;
Down on his back the collar lay,
Bosom and sleeves were gone astray;
At an unmentionable point,
Where his old pants hung out of joint,

His shirt-tail dangled in the wind,
And almost swept the ground behind.
His old "lopeens" were torn and tattered,
His pounding brogues the gutter spattered
As if an elephant's bossy feet,
Were splashing thro' the muddy street,
Ancient lore and local fame,
To the public gives his name;
Shawn-A-Scoob, the mountain clown,
Broom-man-Mayor of Limerick town;
And since the city saw his "croobs",
'Tis overrun and damned with Scoobs.

Now when the Corporation saw
This rustic piece of Nature's law;
They waved their hats and cheered aloud,
As Shawn came trudging thro' the crowd.
Into the centre of the hall,
They pulled the hero, brooms and all;
He almost fell inclined to faint,
Wondering what the devil they meant:
He heard them saying, here and there,
"That's the right stuff to make a Mayor!
Give him the municipal robes!
Henceforth we'll have a reign of Scoobs!
Sergeants-at-mace, take off these brooms -
And then return, and take your place
Before his Worship's platter face!"

Now Shawn, in glistening coat and vest,
Breeches and boots, stood grandly drest:
"Good Heavens!" he muttered, "am I dhraming,
Or are those cursed fellows schaming;
Holy Saint Job! I'd give a cow
For my poor Moll to see me now;
She'd never know me! - no, by delf! -
Why, zouns! I do not know myself!"
He viewed himself from side to side,
His shining boots he proudly eyed;
And turned with stern contempt away
From where his brogues and toggery lay.
For, scarcely was he dressed aright,
When he began to grow polite;
And, like a cultivated creature,
He summoned art to murder nature;
But art refused to take the field,
And stubborn nature would not yield;
So, like a bastard and his mother,
They grew ashamed of one another.
Around his neck the chain they put -
A jewel on a bag of soot.

Now Shawn, by rampant spouters hemmed,
In gorgeous gear stood rigged and trimmed;
Woe to the man who dare presume
To say he ever sold a broom.
Imperious thro' the hall he tramped -
Swore 'pon his honour, frowned and stamped,
Made love to all in "lofty stations",
But kicked and cuffed his poor relations;
Forgot his mountain solitude,
Wife, children, brooms and cabin rude;
He'd almost on the bible swear
That Shawn-a-Scoob was never there.
He took a new name in his office -
"The Right Worshipful Metamorphose".

His wife soon heard the tale of gladness -
She danced and sung with joyful madness;
And burned the cabin to the ground.

Away to Limerick town she flew -
Six ragged imps her steps pursue;
You'd see more feathers on a frog,
Or jewels in a mountain bog,
Than clothes of long or short array,
On Shawn's whole family that day.
Into town, thro' mire and mud,
Like beagles in full chase, they scud.
To the courthouse went they flying,
Where Shawn sat, some cases trying.
Clear the way for the Lady Mayoress,
Lady Scoob, the mountain heiress!
With streaming hair and tattered robe,
Behold the polite Lady Scoob!
Wonder racked her dazzled brain,
When she saw the big "goold" chain,
Round Shawn's neck in pomp suspended -
O'er his robust chest extended -
Giddy doubts upon her grew -
But his platter face she knew,
Out she screamed, "Oh ! Holy Paddy!"
And the youngsters cried out, "Daddy!"
Up right on the bench she flew,
Round his neck his arms she threw,
Shouting - "Murdher! - Pillalue!
Oh Shawn acushla! is it you?"
"Take that woman!" Shawn replied,
"And those urchins at her side,
Put them in for one whole year,
For daring to annoy me here!"

The youngsters raised a sudden wail -
"O don't put Mammy into jail!
Oh, Daddy! Daddy! O, vo, vo!
Sure you wor always good till now!"
"Why, blast your eyes!" said angry Moll,
"Is it my Shawn that's there at all;
Or have the fairies of the heather,
Deluded my senses altogether?
Shawn! Shawn! astoir, avic machree!
Look at your crathurs - look at me!
Not long since, when as poor as Job,
You knew your own fond Molly Scoob;
Many a day, in sun and wind,
I twishted gads your brooms to bind.
Musha, may the devil take the goold
That made you proud, and sthrange, and cowlid;
Sure I can see it at a glance,
When God gives people a little chance,
From poverty's black mud to grow,
Bad luck to me! devil a one they know!
Nor know themselves - ah! Shawn!
Is all your former friendship gone?
I came in here to share your weal,
And, you rogue, you ordher me off to jail!"

From the Bench, the Bobbies tore her,
To the dark jail door they bore her;
But, looking backward, she cried out,
"Oh, Shawn, bad luck to your crooked mouth!
Sure now I know you well, you clod,
The devil carry you, chain and rod;
Soon you forgot your own poor Moll,
Cabin, crathurs, brooms and all;
Soon you forgot my love and care,
Since you became a Saxon Mare;
And now you do not know yourself,
Nor wife nor child, you cursed elf;
For since that big goold chain arrayed you,
You thief, you do not know who made you;

Do not forget, you turncoat mean,
Your father hung in Gallows Green?
For being a Croppy bould and true -
Oh, may the same tight rope hang you!
You country boor - you city bear;
Bad luck to them that made you Mare!"

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Now Shawn, by pride and punch inspired,
In a fine chamber sat retired;
Tw'as night - and he reclining lay
Tired from the bustle of the day.
Servants on tiptoe thro' the rooms,
Stole, lest they'd stir the man of brooms,
Who had so aristocratic grown,
None dare approach the mighty drone.
He drained his glass, and rung the bell -
Up stairs a valet ran pell-mel,
And timid at the door stood still,
To know the great man's lordly will,
"Fellow!" cried Shawn, and as he spoke,
The gold chain on his breast he shook,
And in his fingers, link by link,
Dangled it till he made it clink.
"Fellow! carry that letther there,
To the Gov'nor of the jail, with care;
Damn you, you boothoon, why do you stare?
Don't you know I am the Mayor?"
Downstairs the trembling man withdrew,
Insulted, muttering as he flew,
"Mare - Mare! I know you are of course!
The devil may change you to a horse!"
An hour passed off - until, again
The messenger came hurrying in,
And at his heels Shawn's rural dame -
The answer to his "letther" - came.
The man retired - Shawn locked the door -
Moll stared around at walls and floor,
Then stared at Shawn in mute surprise,
Doubting her reason and her eyes.
"Mary!" said Shawn, "you are aware
I have been chosen Limerick's Mayor!" -
"Oh, arrah! Shawn" - poor Moll replied,
How did you get so Englied?"
"Silence, Madam! hear me out -
Our vulgar habits we must scout.
And grow refined, proud and polite,
As well as those who read and write.
Believe me for the last few days,
I saw more of the world's ways -
And in the Council learned more,
Than e'er I leaned thro' life before.
For dodgery 'til the devil's school,
And would transform the dullest fool
Into the ripest knave!"

"O arrah, Shawn!" -
"Damn it, woman, call me John!
Drop those infernal Irish terms,
Of vulgar speech, the vulgar germs;
Learn the politeness of a lady,
And speak good English calm and steady.
We must forget our origin,
And, like the hedgehog, cast our skin,
Remember you're the Lady Mayoress,
Of all accomplishments the heiress;
Grace and good breeding you must show

In every thing you say and do.
Let nothing common be exempt,
From your aversion and contempt;
Walk thro' the streets erect and proud,
Treating with scorn the plebian crowd.
Despise the poor, and if you will
Give charity, even despise them still.
In feeling let your heart be stone,
Condemn all failing but your own.
Be first in fashionable fame -
Make servants tremble at your name.
If religion touches you at all,
Just wear it as you would your shawl
For fashion's sake - and then, by Job,
You'll be a genuine Lady Scoob!"

"But, Shawn, is that the quolity's way? -
Pardon me John, I mean to say -
Faix, sure, it is a wonder to me,
The gentleman you learned to be.
Believe me, John, without a doubt,
In grandeur I will beat you out:
Get me a carriage, man alive,
And to the devil in style I'll dhrive.
Of fashun I'll be such a sample,
'Ladies' will follow my example,
And soon you'll see about the town,
More pompous Lady Scoobs than one.
But, Shawn, how did you grow so tame?" -

- "Zouns, woman, dhrop that vulgar name
If we call each other Shawn and Molly,
The world will bore us for our folly;
It may do well on a mountain-side,
Such uncouth names to be applied;
But in our sphere tis out of place,
And to high manners a disgrace;
Wherever we are - wherever we go,
We must pretend to see and know
More than all others - and be sure,
To spake the English language pure.
If poor relations dare to claim
Any connexion with our name,
At their pretensions we must scoff,
And as imposthers drive them off.
If principle or honour may
Arise to bar our interest's way,
We'll trample it down, without a blush,
Nor even for justice care a rush.
If that vile farce called nationality,
Should e'er be spoken amongst us, quolity,
We must abjure it, and detest
Its made abettors as a pest.
Where'er dog, devil or calf may be
In power, to them we'll bend our knee;
Pride, sycophancy and effrontry.
Are the best passports in this country.
Now, madam to your room repair,
Two waiting maids shall tend you there;
I long to see my Lady Scoob
Gilt with gold rings and silken robe;
But when the morning sun looks down
On this menagery of a town,
Like Jove and Juno we will ride
In the same chariot side by side;
At every risk we'll take the lead
Of all the tinselled poltroon breed,
And let them see - dear Lady mine -
We, too, are glowworms and must shine;
Go, rest thee 'till the morrow's dawn -
Good night, Mary!" - "Good night, Shawn!"