

Wully lost his heart to her? They were both looking forward eagerly to the dance which would take place on Boxing Day.

"Right father, I'm coming," he replied. "Take care of yourself, lassie darling, and don't work too hard in the sun," he added in a low tone to Nelly, as he pointed to the wooden hay rake she carried. Calling the men about him, Wully McLeod stepped up to a huge hay-cock which lay nearest to the dray, and was about to plunge his fork into it, when he started back.

"Good Heaven, what is this?" he exclaimed. "Is it a bundle o' rags, or what?"

A short examination proved it to be a man who had made his bed in the hay. From his stertorous breathing and the strong effluvia of whiskey which was wafted from every breath he exhaled, he was evidently still under the influence of his potations of the previous night.

"Here you! Wake up will you! Why he is drunk as Davie's sow!" cried Wully.

"Och, let me get at him! It's meself knows the spalpeen! Sure isn't it Slippery Sam, the drunkenest loafer on the gold-fields!" shouted Pat O'Brien, one of the hired hands.

"Eh! Pat, I don't doubt you know him," laughed Wully. "I'll wager you've shouted often enough for him, and he for you."

"God forgive ye, Wully McLeod, for evenin' me to the likes of him! Let me get a holt on him, and I'll chuck him out of the paddock!" cried Pat in evident wrath, as he seized the miserable object and dragged him upon his feet.

"Gently, gently, Pat," said the old farmer, who had now arrived. "Poor fellow, he looks bad. Here, pick him up two of you, lay him in the shade under the hedge there, and let him sleep off his bout." The poor, senseless creature was carried to the hedge as directed, and McLeod and his men went on with their work.

By three o'clock all the hay had been carried, the last wisp had just been forked on to the high dray load, on the top of which, fork in hand, stood Wully McLeod looking flushed and triumphant. "Hurrah, boys!

It's all done, and we've earned our holiday to-morrow. Now for three cheers, boys, hip, hip, hurrah!" he shouted, waving his hat in the air. In his excitement he forgot his precarious position. His foot slipped, and he began to slide from the top of the load of hay.

"Take care, lad!" shouted his father. "Oh, Wully!" cried little Nelly. Poor Wully McLeod dropped his fork at once, and vainly clutched at the loose hay beneath him. But there was nothing to check his fall until, with tremendous force, he struck the hay fork he had just relinquished. It had slid to the ground, prongs uppermost. One of these entered his leg on the inner side of the thigh above the knee, and pierced it through.

For a moment no one moved, and then, just as Wully cried out, "Pull the thing out, someone!" a ragged figure rushed forward and threw himself down on his knees by his side. "For God's sake leave it alone!" he shouted. But it was too late. A farm labourer had already seized the fork and drawn it from the wound. A rush of bright arterial blood instantly followed its withdrawal, and dyed poor Wully's white canvas trousers a livid crimson. The kneeling figure was seen for a moment to grope with both hands, and then to suddenly press both his thumbs with all his force on one particular spot.

"Here you, Slippery Sam, what are you doing there?" cried Pat O'Brien.

"Silence, fool! I am a medical man, a doctor. Quick! any one got a clasp knife? Yes, that'll do. Now for a pocket handkerchief. Just the thing," as Nelly produced a folded white handkerchief from her pocket. "Wrap it round the knife smooth but hard. Now, Pat, give me that belt strap of yours; pass it round the leg; buckle it so. Now for a stick, yes, that'll do," as the broken handle of an old hay rake was shewn him. "But it's too long—break it over your knee, Pat. Look sharp, man, my strength is going. Now twist. Wait a bit."

As he adjusted the pad he had made, a fresh jet of blood followed the removal of his thumbs.