

deep voice. "We poor farmers have no money to buy your modern, devil shooting guns."

Still in the shadow the sergeant smiled grimly.

"The other day I rode beside a man who was shot dead at two thousand yards," he remarked without explanation.

"The Irish Brigade were here, then," replied Klinkermann slowly. "Doubtless they are well armed."

The sergeant said no more, but stretching his legs comfortably under the table, he spread out the major's list, and carefully ticked off the names as they answered to his roll call.

Two troopers carried the spoil out through the windows, and stacked them in the sunlight, where they looked, as the freckled youth said, like a spring cleaning day at the Tower of London.

"Having handed in your names," read the sergeant from the proclamation, "you will return to your farms where, so long as you maintain peace and order, you will remain unmolested by us."

The sergeant flung the paper on the table.

"As you have complied with the regulations, you are permitted to depart," he said, ungraciously, and then stared into the darkness with angry eyes, for he could have sworn that from a distant corner came a gentle ripple of laughter.

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An oil lamp, emitting more smell than light, burned on the bare deal table; from the verandah came the hum of the troopers' voices, an occasional laugh or the click of a match, lighting the bed-time pipe; but in the parlour the sergeant sat alone in the wooden-seated arm-chair. He had little in common with the young troopers. He had heard their yarns in shearing camps and mining towns so many years since that their repetition was monotonous. He hated their youthful cynicism with the wisdom of thirty hard years, and their humour was not his. Diamond must cut diamond, and the laughter that hard days had killed in him, only hard days could revive. He had laughed when

he drove the Q Battery gun to safety, and when he lay behind the rock waiting death with Hallwill, but in the stillness and inaction of this night at the farm he could only yawn and brood.

There was a light tap on the door, which cautiously opened, showing the gaunt figure of Frau Klinkermann silhouetted in the dark background of the passage.

"Good evening," said the sergeant, politely, but the woman only answered by glancing round cautiously, and raising a warning finger.

She stepped forward to the table on tip toe, and came to a standstill almost at his elbow, looking down at him keenly with her shifty, nervous eyes. When she spoke to him she held her hands as usual folded upon her apron, only once raising one of them to her throat, as if endeavouring to clear away the huskiness that almost choked her voice.

"I have news for you—urgent news," she whispered, and she paused to try and catch any change in the expression of his face, not knowing that a long training at poker will school a man against any display of emotion.

"They gave in their arms to-day," she continued more quickly, as if his impassive look annoyed her, "and they tried to make you believe that they meant giving up the war—but they don't—they don't! I tell you they have arms—guns, powder, dynamite, such as you have never seen. 'Tis so." She waited in expectation of some surprise from him, but he only nodded his head unconcernedly.

"Of course they have," he remarked, cheerfully. "My dear Frau, any fool might know they never used that old iron!"

He jerked his head contemptuously towards the window, outside which in heaps were stacked the obsolete relics.

Her first hit had palpably failed, but a smile of half scorn was on her lips.

"I can tell you where they are hidden," she said. The sergeant leaned forward in his chair. This quite altered the case; business was business, and though he despised the woman who was ready to betray her people, he recognized her value to him.