

"You don't understand me! Why, Sir Robert," replied the other, "I know you so well that if you heard the name of your rival, you would first kill him, then powder him, and, lastly, eat him. You are such a terrible fellow that you care about no man's life, not even about mine."

Now it was to this very point that the calculating baronet wished to bring him. The old man, he knew, was whimsical, capricious, and in the habit of taking all his strongest and most enduring resolutions from sudden contrasts produced by some mistake of his own, or from some discovery made to him on the part of others.

"As to your life, Mr. Folliard, let me assure you," replied Sir Robert, "that there is no man living prizes it, and, let me add, your character too, more highly than I do; but, my dear sir, your life was never in danger."

"Never in danger! What do you mean, Sir Robert? I tell you, sir, that the murdering miscreant, the Red Rapparee, had a loaded gun levelled at me last evening after dark."

"I know it," replied the other, "I am well aware of it, and you were rescued just in the nick of time."

"True enough," said the squire, "just in the nick of time: by that glorious young fellow—a—a—yes—Reilly, Willy Reilly."

"This Willy Reilly, sir, is a very accomplished person. I think."

"A gentleman, Sir Robert, every inch of him, and as handsome and fine-looking a young fellow as ever I laid my eyes upon."

"He was educated on the Continent by the Jesuits."

"No!" replied the squire, dreadfully alarmed at this piece of information, "he was not: by the great Boyne, he wasn't."

This mighty asseveration, however, was exceedingly feeble in moral strength and energy, for, in point of fact, it came out of the squire's lips more in the shape of a question than an oath.

"It is unquestionably true, sir," said the baronet; "ask himself, and he will admit it."

"Well, and granting that he was," replied the squire, "what else could he do, when the laws would not permit of his being educated here? I speak not against the laws, God forbid, but of his individual case."

"We are travelling from the point, sir," returned the baronet. "I was observing that Reilly is an accomplished person, as, indeed, every Jesuit is. Be that as it may, I again beg to assure you that your life stood in no risk!"

"I don't understand you, Sir Robert. You're a perfect oracle: by the great Deliverer from Pope and Popery, wooden shoes, and so forth, only that Reilly made his appearance at that moment I was a dead man."

"Not the slightest danger, Mr. Folliard. I am aware of that, and of the whole Jesuitical plot from the beginning: base, ingenious, but diabolical as it was."

The squire rose up and looked at him for a minute without speaking, then sat down again, and a second time was partially up, but resumed his seat.

"A plot," he exclaimed, "a plot, Sir Robert! What plot?"

"A plot, Mr. Folliard, for the purpose of creating an opportunity to make your acquaintance, and of ingratiating himself into the good graces and affections of your lovely daughter: a plot for the purpose of marrying her."

The squire seemed, for a moment, thunderstruck; but, in a little time, he recovered. "Marrying her!" he exclaimed: "that, you know, could not be done, unless he turned Protestant."

It was now time for the baronet to feel thunderstricken. "He turned Protestant! I don't understand you, Mr. Folliard. Could any change on Reilly's part involve such a probability as a marriage between him and your daughter?"

"I can't believe it was a plot, Sir Robert," said the squire, shifting the question, "nor I won't believe it. There was too much truth and sincerity in his conduct. And, what is more, my house would have been attacked last night; I, myself, robbed and murdered, and my daughter, my child, carried off, only for him. Nay, indeed, it was partially attacked, but when the villains found us prepared they decamped; but, as for marriage, he could not marry my daughter, I say again, so long as he remains a Papist."

"Unless he might prevail on her to turn Papist."

"By the life of my body, Sir Robert, I won't stand this. Did you come here, sir, to insult me and to drive me into madness? What devil could have put it into your head that my daughter, sir, or anyone with a drop of my blood in their veins to the tenth generation, could ever, for a single moment, think of turning Papist? Sir, I hoped that you would have respected the name both of my daughter and myself, and have forborne to add this double insult both to her and me. The insolence even to dream of imputing such an act to her I cannot overlook.

You yourself, if you could gain a point or feather your nest by it, are a thousand times more likely to turn Papist than either of us. Apologise, instantly, sir, or leave my house."

"I can certainly apologise, Mr. Folliard," replied the baronet, "and with a good conscience, inasmuch as I had not the most remote intention of offending you, much less Miss Folliard—I accordingly do so promptly and at once; but as for my allegations against Reilly, I am in a position to establish their truth in the clearest manner, and to prove to you that there wasn't a single robber nor Rapparee either at or about your house last night, with the exception of Reilly and his gang. If there were, why were they neither heard nor seen?"

"One of them was—the Red Rapparee himself."

"Do not be deceived, Mr. Folliard; did you yourself or any of your family or household see him?"

"Why, no, certainly—we did not—I admit that."

"Yes, and you will admit more soon. I shall prove the whole conspiracy."

"Well, why don't you, then?"

"Simply because the matter must be brought about with great caution. You must allow me a few days, say three or four, and the proofs shall be given."

"Very well, Sir Robert, but in the meantime I shall not throw Reilly overboard."

"Could I not be permitted to pay my respects to Miss Folliard before I go, sir?" asked Sir Robert.

"Don't insist upon it," replied her father: "you know perfectly well that she—that you are no favorite with her."

"Nothing on earth, sir, grieves me so much," said the baronet, affecting a melancholy expression of countenance which was ludicrous to look at.

"Well, well," said the old man, "as you can't see her now, come and meet Reilly here at dinner the day after to-morrow, and you shall have the pleasure."

"It will be with pain, sir, that I shall force myself into that person's society; however, to oblige you, I shall do it."

"Consider, pray consider, Sir Robert," replied the old squire, all his pride of family glowing strong within him, "just consider that my table, sir, and my countenance, sir, and my sense of gratitude, sir, are a sufficient guarantee to the worth and respectability of anyone whom I may ask to my house. And, Sir Robert, in addition to that, just reflect that I ask him to meet my daughter, and, if I don't mistake, I think I love, honor, and respect her nearly as much as I do you. Will you come, then, or will you not?"

"Unquestionably, sir, I will do myself the honor."

"Very well," replied the old squire, clearing up at once—undergoing, in fact, one of those rapid and unaccountable changes which constituted so prominent a portion of his character—"very well, Bobby; good-bye, my boy. I am not angry with you; shake hands, and d—n Popery."

(To be continued.)

THE HUCKSTER.

He unctiously lays down the law,
He tells you what is right and wrong;
He knows the Gospels, line and verse,
And has the Psalter like a song.

"Now don't do this, and do do that;
For this is wrong, and that is right!"
He'll talk the hind leg off a pot—
As long as talk involves no fight.

When Wrong is warring down the Right,
And Truth by slimy lies is drowned,
He'll talk no more of wrong or right,
Lest he offend or lose a pound.

Give me the man who stands for Right,
And never halts to count the cost;
Who, scornful to live a supple slave,
Would die and know his life not lost.

—J.K.

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