

"Don't let the sight of me frighten you, sir," said the Rapparee. "I never was your enemy, nor intended you harm."

"Frighten me!" replied the courageous old squire; "no, sir, I am not a man very easily frightened; but I will confess that the sight of you has sickened me, and filled me with horror."

"Well, now Mr. Folliard," said the baronet, "let this matter, this misunderstanding, this mistake, or rather this deep and diabolical plot on the part of the Jesuit, Reilly, be at once cleared up. We wish, that is to say, I wish, to prevent your good nature from being played upon by a designing villain. Now, O'Donnel, relate, or rather disclose, candidly and truly, all that took place with respect to this damnable plot between you and Reilly."

"Why, the thing, sir," said the Rapparee, addressing himself to the squire, "is very plain and simple; but, Sir Robert, it was not a plot between me and Reilly—the plot was his own. It appears that he saw your daughter, and fell desperately in love with her, and knowin' your strong feeling against Catholics, he gave up all hopes of being made acquainted with Miss Folliard or of getting into her company. Well, sir, aware that you were often in the habit of goin' to the town of Boyle, he comes to me and says, in the early part of that day, 'Randal, I will give you fifty goodden guineas if you help me in a plan I have in my head.' Now, fifty goodden guineas isn't easy earned, so I, not knowing what the plan was at the time, tould him I could say nothing till I heard it. He then tould me that he was over head and ears in love with your daughter, and that have her he should, if it cost him his life. 'Well,' says I, 'and how can I help you?' 'Why,' said he, 'I'll show you that; her ould persecutin' scoundrel of a father—excuse me, sir—I'm givin' his own words—'"

"I believe it, Mr. Folliard," said the baronet, "for these are the identical terms in which he told me the story before; proceed, O'Donnel."

"The ould scoundrel of a father,' says he, 'on his return from Boyle, generally comes by the ould road, because it is the shortest cut. Do you and your men lie in wait in the ruins of the ould chapel, near *Loch na Garra*—it is called so, sir, because they say there's a wild horse in it that comes out o' moonlight nights to feed on the patches of green that are here and there among the moors—'near *Loch na Garra*,' says he; 'and when he gets that far turn out upon him, charge him with transportin' your uncle, and when you are levellin' your gun at him, I will come by the way and save him. You and I must speak angry to one another, you know; then, of course, I must see him home, and he can't do less than ask me to dine with him. At all events, thinkin' that I saved his life, we will become acquainted.'"

The squire paused and mused for some time, and then asked: "Was there no more than this between you and him?"

"Nothing more, sir."

"And tell me, did he pay you the money?"

"Here it is," replied the Rapparee, pulling out a rag in which were the precise number of guineas mentioned.

"But," said the squire, "we lost our way in the fog."

"Yes, sir," said the Rapparee, "everything turned out in his favor. That made very little difference. You would have been attacked in or about that place, whether or not."

"Yes, but did you not attack my house that night? Did not you yourself come down by the skylight, and enter, by violence, into my daughter's apartment?"

"Well, when I heard of that, sir, I said, 'I give Reilly up for ingenuity.' No, sir, that was his own trick; but after all, it was a bad one and tells against itself. Why, sir, neither I nor any of my men have the power of makin' ourselves invisible. Do you think, sir—I put it to your own common sense—that if we had been there no one would have seen us? Wasn't the whole country for miles round searched and scoured, and I ask you, sir, was there hilt or hair of me or any one of my men seen, or even heard of? Sir Robert, I must be going now," he added. "I hope Squire Folliard understands what kind of a man Reilly is. As for myself, I have nothing more to say."

"Don't go yet, O'Donnel," said Whitecraft; "let us determine what is to be done with him. You see clearly it is necessary, Mr. Folliard, that this deep-designing Jesuit should be sent out of the country."

"I would give half my estate he was fairly out of it," said the squire. "He has brought calamity and misery into my family. Great heavens! how I and mine have been deceived and imposed upon! Away with him—a thousand leagues away with him! And that quickly, too! O the plausible, deceitful villain! My child! my child!" And here the old man burst into tears of the bitterest indignation. "Sir Robert, that d—d villain was born, I fear, to be the shame and destruction of my house and name."

"Don't dream of such a thing," said the baronet. "On the day he dined here—and you cannot forget my strong disinclination to meet him—but even on that day you will recollect the treasonable language he used against the laws of the realm. After my return home I took a note of them, and I trust that you, sir, will corroborate, with respect to this fact, testimony which it is my purpose to give against him. I say this the rather, Mr. Folliard, because it might seriously compromise your own character with the Government, and as a magistrate, too, to hear treasonable and seditious language at your own table, from a Papist Jesuit, and yet to decline to report it to the authorities."

"The laws, the authorities, and you be d—d, sir!" replied the squire; "my table is, and has been, and ever will be, the altar of confidence to my guests: I shall never violate the laws of hospitality. Treat the man fairly, I say; concoct no plot against him, bribe no false witnesses; and if he is justly amenable to the law I will spend ten thousand pounds to have him sent anywhere out of the country."

"He keeps arms," observed Sir Robert, "contrary to the penal enactments."

"I think not," said the squire; "he told me he was on a duck-shooting expedition that night, and when I asked him where he got his arms, he said that his neighbor, Bob Gosford, always lent him his gun whenever he felt disposed to shoot, and, to my own knowledge, so did many other Protestant magistrates in the neighborhood, for the d—d Jesuit is a favorite with most of them."

"But I know where he has arms concealed," said the Rapparee, looking significantly at the baronet, "and I will be able to find them, too, when the proper time comes."

"Ha! indeed, O'Donnel," said Sir Robert, with well-feigned surprise; "then there will be no lack of proof against him, you may rest assured, Mr. Folliard. I charge myself with the management of the whole affair. I trust, sir, you will leave it to me, and I have only one favor to ask, and that is, the hand of your fair daughter when he is disposed of."

"She shall be yours, Sir Robert, the moment that this treacherous villain can be removed by the fair operations of the laws; but I will never sanction any dishonorable treatment towards him. By the laws of the land let him stand or fall."

At this moment a sneeze of tremendous strength and loudness was heard immediately outside the door; a sneeze which made the hair of the baronet almost stand on end.

"What the devil is that?" asked the squire. "By the great Boyne, I fear someone has been listening, after all."

The Rapparee, always apprehensive of the "authorities," started behind a screen, and the baronet, although unconscious of any cause for terror, stood rather undecided. The sneeze, however, was repeated, and this time it was a double one.

"D—n it, Sir Robert," said the squire, "have you not the use of your legs? Go and see whether there has been an eavesdropper."

"Yes, Mr. Folliard," replied the doughty baronet, "but your house has the character of being haunted; and I have a terror of ghosts."

The squire himself got up, and seizing a candle, went outside the door, but nothing in human shape was visible.

"Come here, Sir Robert," said he; "that sneeze came from no ghost, I'll swear. Who the devil ever heard of a ghost's sneezing? Never mind, though; for the curiosity of the thing I will examine for myself, and return to you in a few minutes."

He accordingly left them, and in a short time came back, assuring them that everyone in the house was in a state of the most profound repose, and that it was his opinion it must have been a cat.

"I might think so myself," observed the baronet, "were it not for the double sneeze. I am afraid, Mr. Folliard, that the report is too true—and that the house is haunted. O'Donnel, you must come home with me tonight."

O'Donnel, who entertained no apprehension of ghosts, finding that the "authorities" were not in question, agreed to go with him, although he had a small matter on hand which required his presence in another part of the country.

The baronet, however, had gained his point. The heart of the hasty and unreflecting squire had been poisoned, and not one shadow of doubt remained on his mind of Reilly's treachery. And that which convinced him beyond all arguments or assertions was the fact that on the night of the premeditated attack on his house not one of the Red Rapparee's gang was seen, nor any trace of them discovered.

(To be continued.)

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