

"How do you know," said another, "but he's a Rapparee in disguise?—for that matter, he may be Reilly himself."

"Captain and gentlemen," said Fergus, "if you have any suspicion of me, I'm willing to go anywhere you like; and above all things, I'd like to go to Sir Robert's, because they know me there—many a good bit and sup I got in his kitchen."

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed the sergeant; "now I have you—now I know whether you can tell truth or not. Answer me this. Did ever Sir Robert himself give you charity? Come now."

Fergus perceived the drift of the question at once. The penurious character of the baronet was so well known throughout the whole barony, that if he had replied in the affirmative every man of them would have felt that his assertion was a lie, and he would consequently have been detected. He was prepared, however.

"Troth, then, gentlemen," he replied, "since you must have the truth, and although maybe what I'm goin' to say won't be plaisin' to you, as Sir Robert's friends, I must come out wid it; devil resave the color of his money ever I seen yet, and it isn't but often I axed him for it. No; but the sarvints often sind me up a bit from the kitchen below."

"Well, come," said the sergeant, "if you have been lyin' all your life, you've spoken the truth now. I think we may let him go."

"I don't think we ought," said one of them, named Steen, a man of about 50 years of age, and of Dutch descent; "as Barnet said, we don't know what he is, and I agree with him. He may be a Rapparee in disguise, or, what is worse, Reilly himself."

"What Reilly do yes mane, gentlemen, wid submission?" asked Fergus.

"Why, Willy Reilly, the d—d Papish," replied the sergeant. (We don't wish to fatigue the reader with his drunken stutterings.) "It has been sworn that he's training the Papishes every night to prepare them for rebellion, and there's a warrant out for his apprehension. Do you know him?"

"Troth I do, well; and, to tell yes the truth, he doesn't stand very high wid his own sort."

"Why so, my good fellow?"

"Because they think that he keeps too much company wid Protestans, an' that he's half a Protestant himself, and that it's only the shame that prevents him from goin' over to them altogether. Indeed, it's the general opinion among the Catholics—"

"Papishes!—you old dog."

"Well, then, Papishes—that he will—an' troth I don't think the Papishes would put much trust in the same man."

"Where are you bound for now, and what brings you out at an illegal hour on this lonely road?" asked Steen.

"Troth, then, I'm on my way to Mr. Graham's above; for sure, whenever I'm near him, poor Paddy Brennan never wants for the good bit and sup, and the comfortable straw bed in the barn. May God reward him and his for it."

Now, the truth was that Graham, a wealthy and respectable Protestant farmer, was uncle to the sergeant; a fact which Fergus well knew, in consequence of having been a house-servant with him for two or three years.

"Sergeant," said the Williamite settler, "I think this matter may be easily settled. Let two of the men go back to your uncle's with him, and see whether they know him there or not."

"Very well," replied the sergeant, "let you and Simpson go back with him—I have no objection. If my uncle's people don't know him, why then bring him down to Sir Robert's."

"It's not fair to put such a task upon a man of my age," replied Steen, "when you know that you have younger men here."

"It was you who proposed it, then," said the sergeant, "and d—n me, if you be a true man, you have a right to go, and no right at all to shirk your duty. But stop—I'll settle it in a word's speaking: here you—you old Papish, where are you?—O I see—you're there, are you? Come, now, gentlemen, shoulder arms—all right—present arms. Now, you d—d Papish, you say that you have often slept in my uncle's barn?"

"Is Mr. Graham your uncle, sir?—because if he is, I know that I'm in the hands of a respectable man."

"Come, now—was there anything particular in the inside of that barn?—Gentlemen, are you ready to slap in to him if we find him to be an imposther?"

"All ready, sergeant."

"Come, now, you d—d Papish, answer me—"

"Troth, and I can do that, sergeant. You say Mr. Graham's your uncle, an' of course, you have often been

in the barn yourself. Very well, sir, don't you know that there's a prop on one side to keep up one of the cupples that gave way one stormy night, and that there's a round hole in the lower part of the door to let the cats in to settle accounts with the mice and rats?"

"Come, come, boys, it's all right. He has described the barn to a hair. That will do, my Papish old cock. D—n me, as every man must have a religion, and since the Papishes won't have ours, why the devil shouldn't they have one of their own?"

"That's dangerous talk," said Steen, "to proceed from your lips, sergeant. It smells of treason, I tell you; and if you had spoken those words in the days of the great and good King William you might have felt the consequences."

"Treason and King William be d—d!" replied the sergeant, who was naturally a good-natured but outspoken fellow—"sooner than I'd take up a poor devil of a beggar, that has enough to do to make out his bit and sup. Go on about your business, poor devil; you sha'n't be molested. Go to my uncle's, where you'll get a bellyful, and a comfortable bed of straw, and a winnow cloth in the barn. D—n it, it would be a nice night's work to go out for Willy Reilly, and to bring home a beggarman in his place."

This was a narrow escape upon the part of Fergus, who knew that if they had made a prisoner of him, and produced him before Sir Robert Whitecraft, who was a notorious persecutor, and with whom the Red Rapparee was now located, he would unquestionably have been hanged like a dog. The officer of the party, however—to wit, the worthy sergeant—was one of those men who love a drop of the native, and whose heart besides it expands into a sort of surly kindness, that has something comical and not disagreeable in it. In addition to this, he never felt a confidence in his own authority with half the swagger which he did when three-quarters gone. Steen and he were never friends, nor indeed was Steen ever a popular man among his acquaintances. In matters of trade and business he was notoriously dishonest, and in the moral and social relations of life selfish, uncandid, and treacherous. The sergeant, on the other hand, though an outspoken and flaming anti-Papist in theory, was, in point of fact, a good friend to his Roman Catholic neighbors, who used to say of him that his bark was worse than his bite.

When the party had passed on, Fergus stood for a moment, uncertain as to where he should direct his steps. He had not long to wait, however; Reilly, who had no thoughts of abandoning him to the mercy of the military, without at least knowing his fate, nor, we may add, without a firm determination of raising his tenantry and rescuing the generous fellow at every risk, immediately sprang across the ditch, and joined him.

"Well, Fergus," said he, clasping his hands, "I heard everything, and I can tell you that every nerve in my body trembled whilst you were among them."

"Why," said Fergus, "I knew them at once by their voices, and only that I changed my own as I did, I won't say but they'd have nabbed me."

"The test of the barn was frightful; I thought you were gone; but you must explain that."

"Ay, but before I do," replied Fergus, "where are we to go? Do you still stand for Widow Buckley's?"

"Certainly; that woman may be useful to me."

"Well, then, we may as well jog on in that direction, and as we go I can tell you."

"How, then, did you come to describe the barn—or, rather, was your description correct?"

"Ay, as Gospel. You don't know that, by the best of luck and providence of God, I was two years and a-half an inside laborer with Mr. Graham. As is usual, all the inside men-servants slept, winter and summer, in the barn; and that accounts for our good fortune this night. Only for that scoundrel, Steen, however, the whole thing would not have signified much; but he's a black and deep villain that. Nobody likes him but his brother-scoundrel, Whitecraft, and he's a favorite with him because he's an active and unscrupulous tool in his hands. Many a time, when these men—military—militia—ycoman, or whatever they call them, are sent out by this same Sir Robert, the poor fellows don't wish to catch what they call the unfortunate Papishes, and before they come to the house they'll fire off their guns, pretending to be in a big passion, but only to give their poor neighbors notice to escape as soon as they can."

In a short time they reached Widow Buckley's cabin, who, on understanding that it was Reilly who sought admittance, lost not a moment in opening the door and letting them in. There was no candle lit when they entered, but there was a bright turf fire "blinkin' bonnilie" in the fireplace, from which a mellow light emanated, that danced upon the few plain plates that were neatly ranged upon her humble dresser, but which fell still more strongly