

it's time to go to bed, Alice, an' if you'll jist go an' ask a candle for yourself from the girl in the kitchen—but now I think of it, where's the one you had upstairs?"

"I left it in the kitchen, father, before I went to look for you."

"Here, Alice, give me your hand to the foot o' the stairs, an' I can find my way up. I want no light, that's one comfort!"

In order to reach the stairs, they had to go through the passage which ran parallel with the shop, and they could not avoid hearing what was going on at the moment.

"I tell you what it is, now," said a voice which they had not heard before in the conversation, "I'll not stand this; by the good daylight, I will not! I'll take a joke as well as any man, and give one, too; but I wouldn't let the best man that ever stepped in shoe leather make little of a priest before me, or despise my religion. If Mr. Malone there chooses to let such work go on in his place, it's more shame for him; but I'm blessed if I'll stand by and hear it."

While Cormac was endeavoring to think of where it was that he had heard that voice before, Alice whispered to him, "Ah, then, father, do you hear the man that brought our things here—the carrier they call him—do you hear how well he stands up for his religion?"

"I do, Alice dear, I do hear him," replied her father. "God bless him, poor fellow, let him be what he may. You're right enough, child, it is him, an' no other. But listen a minute."

"Why, Dan Corrigan," said a hoarse, rough voice, in a jibing tone, "is it you that takes it upon you to defend the priests. If the old blind chap inside here was to take it up, one wouldn't so much mind, for he's what I call a real thorough-going papist, trooping off with his daughter to church early in the morning the very first Sunday he was here, and being to confession the day before. He might speak up for religion; but, by Jove, if you profess the same religion, I rather think you don't live up to it; so you're no more than the name of a papist. I'd advise you to let the priests fight their own battles, my fine fellow! They're able enough to do it, and what is more, by all accounts, there can be nothing said of them that they don't deserve. Take my advice, and don't disturb yourself about them. Now, I ask you, as a friend, Dan, how long is it since you set your foot inside a church door? Eh, my lad, tell me that?"

"It's no business of yours, Sam Thompson," retorted Corrigan, in a raised voice; "if I went oftener to church, it isn't here I'd be this evening, or in company with you; and if I don't go as often as I should it's all the worst for myself; but I tell you again, don't speak that way of the clergy in my presence, or, by this and by that! I'll let you feel the weight of a pair of Irish fists."

"Take care of that, Dan," cried Thompson, angrily; "two can use them weapons! I owe you no ill-will; but don't threaten me, if you value your bones—don't, I tell you!"

Here Malone interposed, and came between the belligerent parties, throwing the blame, however, on Corrigan. "I'm surprised at you, Dan," he said, "to come into my shop and raise such a row of a Sunday evening; I'm sure you'd be the last man I'd suspect of doing such a thing."

"Me raise a row!" cried Dan, growing more and more excited. "What for do you say that I did it? You don't throw the blame on them that was blackenin' and slanderin' your religion—but sure you have no religion!—and runnin' down the clergy; but when I stand up and take their part, then I'm down for raisin' a row. The back o' my hand to you, Mr. Malone!" he added, contemptuously; "I always took you for a decent man, and stood up for you, as I'll never do again; for a man that would call himself a Catholic, and let these lads go on as they do in his presence, isn't worth a *traneen*. I'm done with you, Mister Malone, and indeed you'll lose many a customer by this evening's work. Now, Sam Thompson," he added, going up to the surly Englishman, notwithstanding Harry's attempts to keep him back, "now, look here, Sam, this is Sunday evening, an' I don't wish to raise my hand to you; but to-morrow, or any other day that you choose to appoint, I'm ready and willing to try my hand on you for backbiting and slandering of our clergy; so be on the look-out, for I don't want to take you short."

Thompson's reply was a heavy blow with his shut fist, which, striking poor Corrigan right on the breast, sent him reeling across the floor. In another minute Dan was pummeling the Englishman with all his might, interlarding his blows with various exclamations of defiance and contempt. "There now, you treacherous bulldog! Take that, you black-hearted villain!—that'll teach you to talk hard of the priests! Ha! you rascal! you thought to do for me that time; you want to murder me, but, by jingo, I'll give you as good as you bring!" Alas! Thompson had a party to back him, and poor Dan had only his own good fists. Malone was heard dragging him away, while two or three of the others, taking an ungenerous advantage of his being alone, scrupled not to lend a hand against him. Bravely and stoutly he continued to hold his own, though he had no longer time or breath to season his buffets with words, and the combat was still going on, for Dan had got his back against the wall and armed himself with a stick, which, fortunately for himself, had caught his eye standing in a corner; but just then the inner door flew open, and Mrs. Malone rushed out, crying: "Why, what in the world are you about, or have you all taken leave of your senses? Harry Malone, isn't this a fine story for the neighbors to have? Not another word with any of you now, or I'll send off for the police this very minute." Malone, with becoming submission, retired on the word to his *sanctum* behind the counter, and Corrigan's assailants falling back, he was left standing "alone in his glory," stick in hand, whereupon Mrs. Malone ordered him to quit the house instantly, "For," said she, "there can't be luck where such a vagabond frequents."

"Oh, then, never say it twice, ma'am," replied Dan, as, replacing the friendly stick in its corner, he wiped the perspiration from his heated brow. "If ever you catch me here again, you may swear that I've lost my senses; for, please God, I'll never cross your threshold again so long as my name's Dan Corrigan. For Thompson and these other cowardly fellows, perhaps I'd be even with them some of these fine days; and as for you, Mr. Malone, the worst I wish you is, that you mayn't be sorry for all this when it's too late!"

Cormac waited to hear no more, but with a heavy sigh ascended the stairs. Alice would not quit him till she had conducted him to his bedside, and bidden him "Good-night." He charged her not to forget praying for her uncle, that God might turn his heart back into the ways of peace and holiness. "I'd like for us to offer up our prayers together, Alice," said he; "but I don't wish to keep you too long now, for fear your aunt might be wantin' you. Go now, my child, an' may God bless you this night an' for evermore."

"Where's your father, Alice?" inquired her uncle some time after, when she went down stairs, and entered the room, where he and his wife were pledging Sam Thompson (and he them) in nut-brown ale, the shop being now closed, and the day's turmoil over.

"He's gone to bed, uncle." And so saying, Alice sat down quietly in a remote corner of the room.

"Well, to be sure, what an unsociable man that is!" cried Harry.

"Come over here, Alice," said Mrs. Malone, in a coaxing tone; "come over, dear, and take a drink of ale. Here, Harry, fill out some for her in this tumbler."

"No, thank you, ma'am," said Alice, "I don't wish for any."

"Ho! ho!" said Thompson, who, by-the-by, bore the mark of Dan Corrigan's Irish fist in the guise of a black eye. "Ho! ho now I remember what you told me about the prudishness of your young niece, who would not even taste the punch, because the old hunk forbid her. I say, my little wench, wouldn't you take a tumbler of ale from me?" And he tipped a wink at Mrs. Malone. "See here, I'll give you this brand new shilling to buy sugar-stick if you'll only come and drink my health. Come; that's a good lass."

"Indeed, then, I'll not, Mr. Thompson," said Alice, rising from her seat, and speaking in a tone so decided that it was evident her feelings were excited. "I wouldn't taste beer, ale, or spirits of any kind if you'd give me a guinea instead of a shilling."

"And why not, my pretty May-bird?"

"Why not?" repeated Alice, coming a step nearer the table, while her glowing cheek and kindling eye told how