

"No. Why do you axe?"

Tade caught the blacksmith's arm mysteriously, and lowered his voice till it was nearly inaudible.

"Hush! I want to spake to you. I heerd you sayin' jist now there's nothin' for it but the pike—"

"Well, an' what o' that?"

"We'll soon have a thrial at the pike agin, plaze God!"

Tade stood out from the blacksmith exultantly to mark the effect of his words. He was astonished to find them received with a stony stare. Ideas had a long way to travel into Mat Hannigan's brain, and till they were arrived there and fully enconced, he never made sign of their presence. This new idea was like a fuse that burned slowly and noiselessly in, but once at its destination exploded a magazine.

Suddenly the iron cap was raised again and flung mercilessly to the ground: his eyes glared till they threatened to burn the shaggy eyelashes away, and seizing the young man's hand in the clutch of a vice, he roared:

"Say that word agin, mavourneen, say that word agin!"

Tade did say it again, and again, without cooling the blacksmith's ardour to have it repeated, or suggesting to him that it called for any other demonstration than that of squeezing his hand into a jelly.

"Sure you don't want me to be shoutin' it into yer ears till ivery mother's sowl in Kilsheelan knows it better than the A B C!" he at last expostulated mildly.

"Howld yer whisht, man, you worn't as long waitin' for that news as I was. Hurroo! Give us fair play and pike-heads and then the gallows may come as soon as it likes, jist av we can only say we didn't give in without a fight afther all."

"For the matther o' that, shure, it's better to put yer back to the wall and die like a man than to see ivery crathur around you dyin' be slow torture. 'Tis a hot corner o' Purgatory I wouldn't exchange into for wan."

"Inagh! 'twould be the blessed day for all av us we wor kilt root an' branch, av the owld people are niver to have their turn agin. Begor the brute bastes are born ginlemin compared wid the likes av us."

"The divil a much advantage we have o' em, anyhow, barrin' impty stomachs an' small share to put in 'em. 'Twon't be so long, plaze God. We only wanted a ladher, an' be the

powers o' Moll Kelly! we've got wan in airmest at last."

"To the owld boy I pitch yer ladders—little we iver got from 'em but thrayson an' roguery. Gives us pikes in our hands an' sorra the ladher we'll want to tell us what to do wid 'em."

"Ay, but we'll have a ladher tha'll make all the cowl'd wather in Tipperary bile into rebellion."

His eyes searched the dark places of the forge narrowly once more: then, putting his mouth to the ear of the blacksmith, he whispered something which made his listener's rough face bloom into a plain of joy, like a daisy-plot on an iron mountain.

"What! *He* here, did you say! *He* here!" and he seemed ready for all Tade's cautious gestures, to ask him to "Say that word again!" when a new impulse seizing him, he screeched "Whillilew!" with the whoop of a savage and cut a caper three feet in the air. Then, as if ashamed of having been betrayed into the unusual excitement, he bestowed a penitential thump on his forehead, and relapsed into his granite shell.

"'Tis many a long day since I med sitch an omadhawn o' meself," he said contemplatively; "but, be all the Evangelists! it's grate news intirely."

"Talk aisy, av you don't want us all to be slaughtered afore our time. It's a tunderin' saycret, an' I wouldn't ha' brathed it in the cinther o' me own sowl only knowin' 'tis as safe wid you as wid the dead in their graves."

The blacksmith put his big hand over his mouth in token that it was a sepulchre inviolable.

"My hand to you, anything that goes in there niver comes out till it's wanted. Begor, thin, talkin' o' saycrets just reminds me—there's a saycret I kep for many a long day an' glad I am the day is cum to let it out."

"Is it about—"

"Hush! There's a side o' the owld castle left sthandin' still; the people that's livin' there don't know half its quare corners—"

"What the divil do you mane? You don't know—"

"There's an owld undergroud passage from the mews into the castle cellars that hasn't been thravelled 'ithin the mimory o' man—"

Tade Ryan looked really alarmed.

"Holy Vargin, I thought nobody knew that passage but meself an'—*him*!"

"An' I thought I was the only livin' sowl