

It was a wearisome walk to the farm-house; but as soon as she had reached the porch, and lifting up her quavering voice, "God rest you, merry gentle-folk. Let nothing you dismay," the door was flung open quickly, and she was called in and set before such a breakfast as she had not seen before for years. Poor old Mrs. Duffy's heart was very full, and before she could swallow a morsel she said, in a slow and tremulous voice: "I can't think what's come to folks this year. It's like them blessed Christmases we shall have when everybody's friends, when the lion is friends with the lamb and the coccatores with the babies. Here's Dr. Layard's daughter asked me to tea, and I've got a Christmas joint, and now there's such a breakfast as I never see before, and me done nothing for it, I can't think what's come to folks; but it's a blessed Christmas, it is."

"You'll sing your carol for us better after breakfast," said the farmer's wife, "and my husband's father has given me a shilling for you."

Mrs. Duffy shed a few very bliss full tears, and after breakfast sang two or three carols with as much zeal and energy as though they were sure to bring down many blessings on the hospitable roof. It was a little after nine o'clock when she left the house; but there was the Christmas dinner to cook, and it was necessary to go home early for that. She bade them good-bye and took her way joyously across the fields, lying in winter fallow, through which there was a nearer way back to town.

Mrs. Duffy was just turning out of the fields into the high road when a man suddenly started up from behind the hedge and laid his hand roughly on her shoulder. He was a big, heavy looking fellow, in the ordinary dress of a laborer; and he seemed, even at that early hour, to be half stupefied with drink. She looked at his coarse face with a feeling of terror which was new to her.

"I want a shilling off you," he said fiercely.

"A shilling!" she cried; "where should a poor woman like me have a shilling from?"

"Haven't you got a shilling?" he demanded.

Poor Mrs. Duffy had prided herself all her life on never having told a lie. She looked up and down the road, but there was not a creature in sight; and she glanced again hopelessly into the man's savage and stupid face. What should she do? To part with the shilling just given to her would be a very great loss; and she knew it would only be spent in the nearest public house. Should she be doing very wrong to deny having one? It was the first time for years that she had had a whole silver shilling about her, and any moment during that time she could have said "No" boldly and truthfully. Might she not say "No" just this once?

"Haven't you got a shilling?" he repeated, shaking her shoulder roughly.

"Well," she said feebly, "I

haven't had a shilling ever so long; but I have got one now. I'm a very poor old woman, my good young man. If I'd got a penny, I'd give it you, and welcome."

"I must have your shilling," he said doggedly.

"I can't give it you, indeed," she answered; "there's my rent, and coals, and other things; and I'm very poor. You'd only drink it."

She had scarcely finished speaking when she saw the stranger produce a pistol from under his jacket and point it at her. There was a sudden flash before her eyes and she felt a keen pain; then she fell down without feeling or consciousness under the hedge bank on the high road. A few minutes later Dr. Layard's brougham was stopping at the toll gate just outside the town, when a laboring man, who was striding swiftly past, spoke a few words to the driver. Dr. Layard was inside, with Kate, who was going with him to see her god father, a clergyman in the next parish. The doctor, having finished what he had to say to the gate keeper, inquired what the laborer had said in passing.

"He says there's a woman up the road who's been shot, sir," answered the servant; "and he says to me, 'Look sharp after her; she's an old woman, and very poor.'"

"Shot!" exclaimed Dr. Layard; "drive on then, quickly. Katie, don't be frightened. Gate, look after that fellow who has just gone through."

[To be continued.]

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Every temptation is great or small, according as the man is.—*Jeremy Taylor.*

#### MARRIED.

**IRISH-GUNNINGHAM**.—At Bayfield, in the Parish Church, by Rev. C. T. Easton, Frederick Irish, to Mary Cunningham, of Bayfield.

#### DIED.

**STEPHENSON**.—Entered into the rest of Paradise, at the Rectory, Brookville, on Thursday, the 23rd Jan., the Rev. F. Lloyd Stephenson, B.D., Rector of St. Peter's Church, Brookville, aged 52 yrs.

**RENDALL**.—At Afton, on the 5th inst., Joseph Rendall, after a long illness, entered into rest.

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