

fast provided for them, for Father John was sick at heart, and Brian was so overwhelmed with grief that he could not eat.

Both of them, however, tasted the delicious soup, for Michael, who had served under Sarsfield, learned the mysteries of the cuisine while camping. And it was the very best thing, perhaps, they could partake of.

Bidding good-bye to the old man and telling him that he would return at nightfall, the priest, leaning on Brian's arm, slowly and sadly left the cave, for he was feeble and weak; and despite his efforts to the contrary, felt as if some impending gloom hung over him. Brian, angry and ashamed with himself for having slept on his watch, and fearful of his mother's death, was eager to proceed; but the tottering gait of Father John admonished him to curb his impatience and walk as slowly as his feeble constitution required. They had not proceeded far from the old abbey when they were overtaken by old Michael, who, kneeling down on the green sward, asked the priest's blessing.

"Why, Michael," said the priest, kindly, "what is the matter with you this morning? The fright that you got yesterday is not out of your heart yet; but, thank God, the chase is over, and will scarcely be resumed to-day, for, if they feel as tired as I do, they will remain long enough in their beds to give me time to visit the dying woman and return to the safe shelter of the cave."

"I don't know how it is, Father, but I don't feel at all right somehow: I had drames this mornin', and as you didn't have time to say Mass, why give me your blessin', an' I'll go back in pace."

Brian also knelt on the ground and received the holy priest's blessing, after which they resumed their walk to the river, where the boat lay in readiness. The sun was about two hours high in the heavens, and shone in unclouded lustre upon the scene. The lark was caroling high in air, the song of the thrush was heard on every tree, and the sweet cadences that burst from a thousand musical throats filled the woods and groves with a flood of delicious melody. The scent of the

hawthorn diffused its odor on the morning air and wanted with every passing breeze, while the gaudy and brilliant furze opened its petals to the sunlight presenting a contrast to the green foliage by which it was surrounded singularly pleasing and grateful to the eye. It was one of those lovely Summer mornings, calm, bright and beautiful, when the angels seem to smile upon Ireland, and it looks more of heaven than of earth.

The priest and Brian had traversed about half the distance between them and the river, which now burst upon their sight, and Brian was in the act of leading his companion to a gentle declivity which sloped gradually downwards to the water's edge and was clear of trees and brush which would enable their progress to be more safe and speedy, when their ears were suddenly saluted by the sound of advancing horsemen at no great distance from where they paused to listen. They could not be mistaken, it was the regular tramp of drilled and armed men. They had often heard it before, and a fearful sense of danger shot through their hearts at one and the same moment.

"If these are Crosby's dragoons, Father, and I think they are," exclaimed Brian, "our lives are not worth a minute's purchase. Run! run! If we can only reach the river we are safe, the boat lies on the beach, and Fergus is waiting for us at the other side."

"I will do my best, Brian; but I am afraid that I shall never reach it alive. My old limbs are weak and not sufficiently rested after yesterday's toil to endure much torture. But hark! they are approaching, I can hear the shouts, they see us, and, may God forgive them, they are plying spur and whip to overtake and murder us."

Their shouts could now be distinctly heard ringing through the woods, drowning the song of the bird, and echoing in discordant tones across the river. Brian and the priest dashed on, but it soon became evident to the young man that the priest's strength was failing. They were now within fifty yards of the river, but so enfeebled had Father John become that it was with the utmost difficulty he could move a limb. A pistol shot fired by the foremost of