

Calvert's angry remonstrance that they are acting under orders; and moreover they request the gentlemen to retire to their own rooms, where they will be secure. After a moment's hesitation, the two friends turn on their heels, Calvert to make his way to the side of his exhausted and slumbering parent, and Harvey to pace up and down the long corridor, and from time to time to peer through the window at its end.

Poor McWhirter, more than half fuddled by this time, and thus unpleasantly disturbed in his cups, was weakly wringing his hands and bemoaning himself.

"Wae's me, wae's me! what's this o't? We'se a' be harried, an' brunt, an' slain. What set ye, Saunders McWhirter, to mak or mell wi' ither fowk's bizness?"

Barney, who had been sitting quietly in his original position at the board, ever since the alarm, here essayed a word of consolation; but it must be confessed, somewhat after the fashion of Job's comforters.

"Thru' for yer haner; ye'd best have kept yer spoon for yer own stirabout. Ye're like to get it scaldin' hot now, I'll be bound."

"Oh, Maister Bralligan, ye winna let them shoot me, will ye?"

"Niver a ha'porth o' fear, man!" was the consoling reply. The boys wouldn't waste shot on the likes av yez. Ye'll niver lave the wurruld till ye get a lift in it, me sowl. It's the yard av himp, an' the lape from the lafeless tree that's to fit ye out for your long home. But maybe the boys wouldn't be again accommodhatin yez wid a bit av divarshin that way, whin wanst the fight's over."

"Losh! man; it's no hangin' ye mean, is it?" said the trembling Scot with every particular red hair of him standing on end like the "quills of the fretful porcupine."

Barney's meditated reply was cut short without ceremony.

A burst of ferocious cries shook the windows of the room, and a crash of musketry so near and so loud that all its inmates rushed behind the heavy oaken stair-case for protection.

Only Barney sat impassible to outward seeming, but eagerly listening nevertheless.

His practised ear distinguished with accuracy the more distant and scattered pattering of the assailants from the regulars' steady and measured volleys.

A rush had evidently been made and repelled: for he heard the sergeant's hoarse call.