

"My good fellow," he shouted, "can you guide me to the neighbouring town?"

"Is it the town, ava? Shure, your honour, I could not guide myself there, let alone another, on such a murky night," was the frank, hearty reply.

"Can you direct me to some place of shelter, then, and I will pay you well?"

The figure came close up to him, a great brawny, broad-shouldered Celt, with twinkling black eyes and a broad, grinning mouth.

"Let me look at your honour's face." The young soldier turned his open, honest eyes towards him. "It's a fair one if the world don't spoil it," the man muttered. "Now, sir, I'll deal fairly with you, if you'll do the same belikes to me. Will you give your word that you'll never let on to any man, woman, or child what your eyes may see, or your ears hear, this blessed night?"

The promise was given.

"Come, then, your honour, and I'll give you the pattern of a lodging, and the best I can offer, and may be something more besides."

He then led the way in a contrary direction to that in which the young soldier had been going, and after about a quarter of a mile's walking paused. The sportsman listened; he thought that he heard the murmur of voices near him, but he could distinguish no sign of a dwelling. Presently, however, he thought that he perceived a black smoke rising up out of the heather through the mist, and became more certain of it as the vapour was mingled occasionally with sparks of fire.

His guide came nearer to him, and put his finger to his mouth, with an odd good-natured look of warning.

"Your promise, your honour—you mind it?"

"On my oath," was the reply.

"Come on then," and Sutherland followed his guide to the side of a hillock, in which was a rude door, from whence the smoke and the flames and voices clearly proceeded.

The man now gave a low whistle, which was answered from within, and a rugged head was thrust out from the door, and a short parley ensued, at the close of which his guide returned to Sutherland, saying that it was all right, and then, clasping his hand and uttering more sternly than before his brief admonition—"Remember your promise"—led him into the secret chamber.

It was in a cave hollowed out in the hill, and only consisted of one apartment, at the end of which blazed an enormous turf fire, with a huge cauldron upon it, containing what Sutherland knew at once to be a private still, so that the mystery of the secret habitation and promise was at once explained.

There were no persons in the cave but the owner of the rugged head aforesaid, an old bleak-eyed man, who appeared to be thoroughly smoke-dried in his vocation, and a bare-legged urchin of twelve who attended to the fire.

On the whole, barring the smoke, it was a cozy enough lodging to fall in with upon a cold, dark, misty night, upon the Larren moors, and Sutherland felt no scruple of conscience in making himself thoroughly comfortable. He was no informer, and he had no intention of becoming one, so he warmed himself and dried his clothes by the great turf fire, and ate heartily of some oatmeal bannocks and capital potatoes which were set before him, and he took a very fair quantity of the very best potheen that had ever passed through his lips, drinking *salto cocco* to the health of the King, and openly to that of his host and old Ireland, in every fresh pannikin; the only remark that Paddy condescended to make during the intervals between his draughts being—

"Bedad now, this bates Parliament entirely."

Well, the end of it was, that what with the cold and the hunger, and the thirst, and the means resorted to counteract them, the soldier and sportsman accepted with gratitude the "wrap-rascal" or frieze coat of his entertainer, and lay down beside the fire, and was soon asleep.

He had not slept long, as he thought, before he was awakened by the huge hand of his host being laid upon his shoulder. He started up.

"Shure, then, it's yourself that have had an illigant nap, as ye well may, whose heart is light and bones weary, but you must get up now, sir, for the morning's breaking, and it would be better for all parties that you were away from this before daylight comes."

It was even so, the night had passed rapidly, but refreshingly. Sutherland rose as fresh as a lark, and a hasty bite and sup, consisting of some remains of the last night's meal and a glass of the staple commodity of the cabin, sent him off happily upon his journey, and a liberal douceur to the lame man and boy left happy faces behind him.

His guide of the preceding night accompanied him for a short distance, until he brought him to the track which, as he told him, led to a hill, from the top of which he would be able to see the town, and then, having accepted with reluctance the gift, and with a broad grin the thanks and hearty shako of the hand which accompanied it, he bade the young soldier remember his promise, and left him and went his way.

Now for the sequel.

Sutherland said nothing about his adventure, and very shortly afterwards was summoned home, by the sickness of his father, who was an old man, and had been long failing. He found him in so weak and precarious a state that he was unable to leave him, and continued with him until, after six weeks of anxiety and watching, the old man died.

The necessary arrangements for the family, and the distribution of the property, and administration of the will detained him some time longer, so that it was more than three months before he returned to his regiment.

During that time he had heard frequently from his brother officers, but the news contained in one of their letters affected him strangely.

"We have been still hunting," said the writer, "and have made a capture. Information was laid before the excise officer of the existence of a still in the mountains above us, and I was sent with my party to protect the gaugers. Nasty work, I hate it. Why won't the Government make better whiskey and sell it cheaper? they say that if they did it would not be so good as the old potheen, because it could not be made in such small quantities. I am no judge of what might be, I like the stuff as it is, and have no enmity to the poor fellows who make it, and here am I obliged, not only to punish, but ruin them! I had rather punish the informers."

Not very loyal this of Sutherland's correspondent, but such sentiments were not uncommon with young officers in those days.

"Well," continued the writer, "we went out, made our point, and found the still; I will spare you the details. It was in a subterranean room or cave in the middle of the moors. The distillers had escaped, the informer got the twenty pounds, and I a cold *roidé tout*."

I have said that this intelligence annoyed Sutherland greatly; he could not help fancying that the "still," so captured, was the same whose existence he had promised to conceal, and on his return to the regiment, his suspicions were turned into certainty by a description of the place from whence it had been taken.

Time went on. Again Sutherland was out shooting upon the moors at some distance from the spot of his former adventure, again the mists gathered round him, again he lost his way, and the night drew in. His position recalled vividly to his mind the events of the first evening, and as if to make the resemblance greater, out of the thick darkness rose a tall figure, which the sportsman immediately recognised as that of his guide and host in the secret chamber.

The recognition was mutual, but to the officer the ideas which it awakened in his mind were far from pleasant.

"This poor fellow," he said to himself, "will most certainly connect me with the loss of his still. It is a lonely place to meet with an angry and desperate man, and he has doubtless companions within call, I am in for it sure enough. Well, if I must fight I must, but I will speak him fair at all events." So he looked gravely in his

old acquaintance's face, who returned the glance with a quiet smile.

"So ye are lost agnain, are ye?" he said; "sure it's a pity but them ye belong to don't take better care of you, ava, and you'll be wanting a lodging agnain, I'll be bound for it, such as you had out before."

And his countenance to Sutherland's suspicious eye assumed an ominous expression.

"I have heard of your loss," he said; "and I swear to you that I had nothing to do with it. I kept my promise faithfully. I was away when your property was taken; I never mentioned it to anybody before or afterwards, I assure you upon my honour."

"Is it your promise, sir?" replied the Irishman, "shure and why wouldn't you keep it? and didn't I know when I took ye to the ould place that you would keep it, by your honest young face? Would I have taken you there at all at all if I hadn't? Is it the likes of you that would turn informer? Bad cess to the whole seed and generation of them; the curse of Cromwell be upon all those informing villians."

"Well," said Sutherland, "I am glad that you did me the justice to think that I kept the secret. However, it got abroad."

"Keep the secret, your honour!" said the other, with an inexpressible look of slyness upon his good-natured face, "will your honour keep another if I tell you one?"

"Surely," replied the officer, "if you like to trust me."

"Well then, by dad," laughed Paddy, "I don't see how I am to help it if you are to get food and lodging, and may be a thrifle of drink, this night on the lone moors. It was the informer that your honour was spaking about, and the ould pot, the poor ould pot, which is gone entirely anyhow." And he shook his head with a comical air of gravity.

"And troth and she was a poor ould pot, and you see, she was worn out to next to nothing, and she done me many a good turn these last ten years, more or less; and she was not, so to say, good for much when I swapped her first; and so just because she was of no use and I had nothing but empty pockets to buy another with, I just—whist, whist, was that a foot I heard?—no, all safe—I just went and informed against her myself, the creature, and they went and got the sogers and carried her off in state; it was honour for the likes of her, and I got the informer's money. It was not so dirty as may be it might have been, and I just went and—put your ear down, sir, and I'll whisper it to you—got a bran new one out of the notes, and if ye'll come with me a little beyondst ye'll find a place the very pattern of the last, and, maybe, pannikin of the right sort out of the new still. Long life to his Majesty, and the back of my hand and the sole of my foot to the blackguard gaugers who paid for her."

MY FIRST (AND LAST) DESCENT INTO A LEAD-MINE.

IT HAPPENED to be staying at a friend's house in one of the northern counties of England one summer, when it was suggested by our host that I should ride over to Aulhorpe, and see the splendid hydraulic engine which had been recently erected for the purpose of draining the lead-mines. My ardour was but slightly damped when I was told that an inspection of the engine was not to be accomplished without the hazard of a tiring and comparatively dangerous descent of the "climbing way."

There were at the time I speak of but few hydraulic engines of the kind we proposed to visit, so the resolve to make the inspection was, in spite of its comparative danger to a novice, quickly formed. On arriving at the mine, we sent for the "captain" of the works, and under his directions, divested ourselves of all our clothes, and substituted the common working-dress of the miners; and each of us was furnished with a lump of clay about the size of an orange, into which (a hole being made with