

he (Mr. Breeson) was always trying to convert to the theory that Sir John Franklin would have been found had not "helectricity drew 'im hup to the North Pole and there held him."

Mr. Breeson, also, frequently confided to Uncle Rashe that he "allus liked to go awistin' where the wittles flowed fresly," and perhaps for this reason as much as any other, he had made the present trip.

After dinner, the male members of the "Company" and family—excepting Jim, who, for some days had been away helping relatives about "spring's work"—assembled in the yard; Harry and his father to prepare the team for their journey to court, and the remainder of the party to smoke, discuss Fenians and exchange harrowing tales of war.

"I jined the milishy when I wa'n't nothin' but a youngster in thirty-seven, an' ketch'd the rheumatiz an' ha'n't never got over it sence," said Uncle Rashe, plaintively adding—"Ef it wa'n't fer that, I'd leave the old woman an' jine now, an' help clean these ere Irish reskils out."

"It's a werry foolish idee for 'em to try to take Canady," said Mr. Breeson, in solemn tones, "werry foolish, I says. But its a kind o' lectricity hin the hatmosfeer what draws 'em hup here. A kind o' lectricity, that's what it har!"

By this remark as well as by his Franklin theory, it will be noted that Mr. Breeson was a thinker far in advance of his generation.

"Dat's so, dey dun know sontings," chimed in Cliphos, who had returned to his work at noon. "If dey tenk dey take it me, it fite come like z: dev! It don't fraid—b'gosh look dar!" he broke off, pointing towards the road, "Hole Winglee run heem leg off!"

Mr. Wingley was coming at the top of his speed, evidently in a state of excitement, waving a paper as he ran.

"Jest look at that ar!" he gasped, handing the paper to Mr. Stebbins, and sinking exhausted upon a log.

The others crowded around to examine the document, and, wondering, read the following announcement:—

**"BEWARE! WHEN THREE METEORS FLASH OVER THE NEAREST WOODS AT MID-NIGHT, BE READY TO PART WITH YOUR LIVES! LIBERTY FOR IRELAND, AND DEATH TO THE HERETICS!"**

Harry was the only member of the group who smiled on hearing the direful threat. He could believe it to be nothing but a silly hoax, and for a moment suspected Jim as the author, but as the latter had been so long absent, and, ere leaving, had been careful to keep his dark doings secret, Harry dismissed the thought.

"If Fenians were going to attack the place they would hardly take such pains to inform us," he said, lightly addressing the dismayed group, who, with the exception of Mr. Stebbins, senior, had evidently taken the matter in frightened earnest.

"I dunno Harry, you better not laugh," said Uncle Rashe, shaking his head, and Mr. Wingley added, tremulously,

"If ye won't go 'way Harry, I'll git the old woman and stay up with ye and show ye how to fight the critters."

Seeing the old man's anxiety for his presence, and thinking besides of the women indoors, Harry consented, though rather unwillingly, to remain at home.

"Such nonsense!" he exclaimed, impatiently, as he helped his father hitch the old

horse to the wagon—"Even supposing there's anything to that ridiculous 'warning,' how do we know *what* mid-night is meant?"

"Wal, Harry, I guess you didn't notice them figures for the day of the month which they'd sot, an it's to-night on a corner of the paper. I hadn't orter go, but I'm obleeged to, and its best for you to stay."

And after calling Polly for a good-bye kiss, giving many injunctions to take care of themselves and the "stock" and promising to be home early in the morning, Mr. Stebbins clattered over the hill and disappeared.

Everybody found it hard to settle themselves to work after his departure.

The old men placed in readiness every available weapon, and made a pretence of chopping wood and helping about the "chores," but as twilight drew near it was noticeable that they flocked into the house.

Joe, alone, who, as usual, was on hand, seemed entirely undisturbed.

Harry at work in the corn-field, thought many times during the afternoon of Esther with her aunt and Marie Louise alone in the big house, and feeling that Cliphos should be with them, dismissed him at night with the milking but half done.

To his surprise and displeasure, on bringing the milk to the house at dusk, he found Cliphos comfortably ensconced in an easy chair in the kitchen.

"Dey tell it dey's goin' stay over on Misser Green's to-night," he said in answer to Harry's remonstrances; and though Harry pressed the question, fearing that the Frenchman's indolence and cowardice had led him to invent this excuse, he still returned the same answer.

"If you walks 'ome hevery night, you gets many a chance to ride, eh, Cliphos?" enquired Mr. Breeson.

"Bah non!" answered Cliphos, shaking his head dolefully. "Lots folks pass it, but dey no want see it; turn its head on todder end!"

There is little need to relate the earlier events of the evening; how everybody, especially the older people, trying to appear unconcerned, fidgeted and worried incessantly; and Grandma Stebbins at last declaring that the Fenians might come if they was a mind to, she was going to bed, departed to her slumbers. Soon after the lights were turned down, the inmates of the big kitchen gathered closer, and in silence and darkness waited the mysterious Fenian signals.

Harry, standing with his mother and Polly directly before a window which faced the nearest wood, waited incredulously; and it was with a thrill of surprise and excitement that he beheld, just at midnight, three lights rise above the tree tops in quick succession, and disappear.

The sight almost demoralized his brave corps of assistants; and when, a short time later, the faint light of a waning moon discovered to the watchers' view, several dark figures stealing up to the hedge, each and every doughty warrior, excepting Harry and Joe, beat an ignominious retreat.

Mr. Wingley was suddenly "took" with a violent pain, and declared he must go and find some "kyan pepper"; Uncle Rashe felt his "rheumatiz" come on so dreadfully, that he was obliged to stagger to a far corner of the room, and sit down. Mr. Breeson, "thinkin' as 'ow 'e heard the hanimals a bellerin'," made a feint of departing to

them; while poor Cliphos, dropping his sword with a clatter, bolted into Grandma Stebbins' bedroom, nearly upsetting the old lady, who had been poking her night-capped head through the doorway, in her endeavors to see if the Fenians had come.

She was quite convinced by Cliphos' onslaught that they had come, and her screams of "Lord ha' massay!" accompanied by like exclamations from Mrs. Wingley and Aunt Marthy Ann, groans from the elderly warriors, very loud and irreverent French prayers from Cliphos and giggles from Polly, made a pandemonium which Harry and his mother strove to quiet, fearing, as they did, an assault from the men outside.

If our friends could have heard the chuckles just then, proceeding from the hedge, they would have been more at ease; but not being able to do so, and feeling sure that Fenians were in ambush near, ready at any moment to attack the house, Harry remained at his post, prepared to act on the defensive.

In the meantime, the inmates of the brick mansion, who had not gone "hover on Misser Green's," were undergoing much trouble and alarm.

As dusk drew near, they looked anxiously for Cliphos' appearance, but looked, as we know, in vain.

Finding he did not come, the city aunt's nervousness increased, and for an hour she paced the floor bemoaning the fate that brought her to Canada to be murdered along with two girls by Fenians.

At last, when from an upper window she beheld the three signal lights, the old lady's terror overmastered her; and declaring that she could not and would not stay longer there, and was going up to Lysander Stebbins, at once, she bade Esther and Marie Louise prepare to accompany her.

Esther, in vain, endeavored to dissuade her aunt, pointing out their far greater danger from Fenian molestation in leaving the house, than in remaining quietly indoors, hence the two were obliged to make ready.

The lonely midnight walk was rather terrifying, and the three women clung closely together, their hearts many times throbbing hurriedly when on hearing some slight noise they imagined a host of desperadoes in pursuit.

Though no one molested them, it was with great relief that our travellers saw the dark outlines of Castle Askew, and as they neared the gate, Esther turned to her companion with the words, "Now we are safe," on her lips. They were not uttered, however, for as she turned, the moon, which a moment after passed under a cloud, revealed a glimmer of steel and outlines of crouching figures in the hedge.

Marie Louise saw them at the same time, but the aunt did not, and though almost too terrified to move, her companions forced themselves to walk forward so calmly as not to arouse her suspicions of danger.

Harry during this time had caught sight of their forms at the gates, and with a slight exclamation bent forward and noiselessly raised the window. Yes, surely somebody was advancing stealthily along the path.

Harry waited until the supposed Fenians were within a few paces, and then, raised his revolver, calling loudly:

"Halt, or I fire!"

Taken by surprise, thinking only in her terror of the men behind, and of how she could warn the sleeping house of their pres-