

THE FRIAR'S HEAD

A Story of The Penal Days in Ireland.

(By P. J. Coleman, in Rosary Magazine.)

(Continued.)

Late that night Father O'Rourke reached Taaffe Hall. He was garbed as a peddler and carried a pack on his back—a pack of jewelry, trinkets, ribbons he had brought from France as a trader. With them he passed from village to village, from town to town, gained entrance to houses of the rich and put himself in guarded communication with his widely scattered flock.

The facade of the house was dark as he approached it from the ancient avenue of elms, and a feeling of apprehension—the sense of some unknown danger or disaster—suddenly chilled him.

Christine Taaffe met him in the hall. She was pale and haggard and her eyes were red, as from weeping. "Oh, James," she cried, running towards him. "God has answered my prayers."

She was wringing her hands and her distress, clearly visible, smote him to the heart.

"What is it, Christine?" he asked, catching her trembling hands in his own. "What is it?"

"Father," she sobbed, her tears flowing suddenly. "Father is very ill. He was stricken last night and we thought he would not live to see you. We did not know where to seek you; but we prayed for you to come, and the good God has sent you."

"Is it, then, so serious?" asked the priest.

"He will not live during the night. The doctor from Ballymore has been here and rendered what aid he could. But he has pronounced his case hopeless."

"Is he conscious?" asked the priest.

"Just now he is, thanks be to God! Let us go to him!"

Christine led the way upstairs, where her father lay. An old servant-woman was kneeling by the bed, and clustered candles in silver candelabra made a soft light in the room. The sick man's face showed white and drawn in its frame of dark beard and hair.

His eyes were closed wearily, and from his pale lips came a stentorian breathing.

The old woman rose from her knees as the girl and priest approached the bed.

"God help the poor Master this blessed night, and God bless an' comfort his pritty colleen!" sobbed she, fingering her beads.

Christine leaned over the pillows. The soft touch of her hand on his damp forehead aroused her father.

"Is he come?" he asked feebly.

"He is here," whispered the girl, murmured the pale lips. "James, my lad," he went on, groping on the coverlet for the priest's hand, "I'm glad you came to me. I wish to make my peace with God!"

"Deo gratias!" murmured the priest.

"My fathers erred in leaving the old faith—I see it all now, here in the valley of the shadow, with earth's transitory things fast fading away. You know their motive—worldly interest and power. But it was all a mistake. What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"

For the good they did, for their secret affection for the old faith, despite their outward apostasy, the priest and friar in hours of danger, may God be good to their souls! But I have long seen the light and now am ready to follow it—even at the eleventh hour, if it is not too late."

"It is never too late to accept God's grace," sighed the priest.

"God in His mercy sent me an angel of light in my youth—a beautiful and sainted mother, Christine, my child," resumed the baronet.

"And she left an angel of light behind her in her daughter," murmured the priest.

The sick man smiled feebly. "Yes, yes, I know it," he went on. "You will be good to her when I am gone, James, my boy?" he asked.

"I will be a brother to her in all that a brother can," assured the priest.

"Thank you, my lad," whispered Sir Lucas. "Her mother first led me to God. The example of her sweet, unselfish life showed me the error of my ways—and the errors of my fathers—in forsaking the Church for a little worldly power—to retain an estate that passed from them, as it is now passing from me. For her sake I braved the displeasure of the Government in keeping an altar, harboring priests, and having the Mass in my home. But those Masses have hallowed the old place and called down God's mercy on me at last. Father, I am ready to recant my errors and be received into the old Church of my fathers. But first I must speak of Christine. Christine, my child, draw near."

"Yes, father, I am here," sobbed the girl.

"I had hoped to see you settled in life before I died—had hoped to see you married to some good man—"

"I desire no earthly espousals," sobbed Christine. "My heart is set above."

"Thanks to your good mother's teaching," murmured Sir Lucas.

"'Tis just as well—'tis the best I could wish for my darling. But I did not always think so. I saw with pleasure for a time the attentions of the Viscount Kingscourt. That again was human pride—for I now know that his unworthy of one so good and pure and lovely, and I'm glad you refused him as you did. Then there was young Captain Macdonald—in every way a desirable suitor."

"Cornac Macdonald is a noble

gentleman," replied Christine. "If I desired earthly honors and earthly happiness, I know I should have found them with one so good and brave."

"And young Philip Macdonald—he, too, would have secured my daughter's happiness."

"He, too, is honorable and brave, as becomes the son of distinguished sires," added the girl.

"But now all that is changed, and I would not alter or influence your decision by an iota, my child," murmured Sir Lucas. "The estate will still remain in the family. You, darling, as a religious cannot retain it. The Government would not permit you—heirless though you be. It will go to Richard Taaffe, my brother's son. But what of it? All will pass away. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. Ah, my child, yours is the true wisdom—laying up riches in heaven where the moths cannot consume. I approve of your decision to take the veil, and your prayers will be an aid and a comfort to me hereafter. Listen, Christine! When I am gone, you will find in that old chest in the library money enough to equip you for your new life—a dowry I had intended for your earthly bridal. Do not worry about the estate. The Government will see to its safe and satisfactory disposal. But you may not become a religious in Ireland."

"I wish only to leave the distracted country forever and devote my life to God," sobbed Christine.

"You, Father James—to your protection I commend her. You will see to her, and the consummation of her wishes. Some place on the Continent you will find her a community of Irish nuns."

"There is one in Paris, under the protection of King Louis, endowed by Irish nobles," said the priest.

"I leave the rest to you, my lad. I know you will not forsake her," faintly smiled the sick man.

"'Tis a sacred trust and I will be loyal to it, so help me God!" protested the priest with fervor.

"Then I die happy," sighed the weary baronet. "But one thing more—to fulfill your promise you must leave Ireland at once. Your life is in constant peril here. And, think you, what would become of my darling if you, her protector, should fall into the hands of the persecutors?"

For her sake, then, and until you are safely embarked for France, you must run no unnecessary risk. The obligation you have taken upon yourself implies extraordinary precaution on your part to avoid arrest while you are in Ireland. I know that you carry your life in your hands every hour you are here, so you must promise to be careful."

"I promise," said the priest.

"I know, too, that in the pursuit of souls and the discharge of his sacred ministry the priest is willing to brave every danger. But, once again, until you have discharged your obligation to my daughter, you must not be over-zealous."

"Your father's sake, God will overlook my failings. You have imposed on me a holy trust, and God will help me, in my weakness, to discharge it. Some day, if it be His will, I may return to Ireland to complete my ministry. But now—"

"Thanks, a thousand thanks, my lad," murmured the baronet, his fingers pressing feebly on his nephew's hand. "And now, Father James, I am ready for your sacred offices."

"When the windows began to glow in the rising dawn and the birds were twittering in the park, Sir Lucas Taaffe, with Christine, Father James and the servants of his household kneeling about him, feebly closed his eyes. "Miserere mei, Domine!" of the priest sounding an assurance of divine mercy in his ears.

IV.

Once again the priest-hunters were closeted with Viscount Kingscourt in his library at Kingscourt, and once again the Viscount was wroth with his servants. In ungovernable rage he had sent for them peremptorily from Boyle.

"The week's half gone. The hanging oak still stands, but the fox is yet uncaught," he greeted them sarcastically.

"Your Honor," whined Bagshaw, "I've done all that mortal man could do, but I've not got the scent yet."

"A pretty priest-hunter, you!" scoffed the Viscount. "I could do better myself if I might descend to such dirty work." "And you, Birmingham, what have you to say?"

"Don't blame me, Your Honor," grunted Birmingham. "I got on the trail, but he got away. You know, Your Honor, it's the whole country against the two of us. The priest has a thousand friends where we haven't one. I heard he was hidden on Trinity Island, an' I went there, but he evidently got the word an' escaped. At all events, I've good evidence he was there, because I found this in the old abbey. It's a priest's book of some kind."

He produced a breviary.

The Viscount examined it curiously. "Ex libris Jacobi O'Rourke," he mused, reading the inscription on the fly-leaf. "Hal! printed at Louvain in the year 1720. Well, Birmingham, I exonerate you from censure. You've evidently been diligent, but do not lose zeal. Remember, the alternative of the oak tree or fifty guineas still stands. You, Bagshaw, you'd better be careful," he growled, turning to Bill.

"I've done me besht, Your Honor," growled Bill, "and a man can do no more."

"Pshaw!" sneered the Viscount. "You've run down friars before this, so you're no novice at the game. You needn't be scrupulous at taking him alive. Remember, he's a felon, and his head is as good as his hide. But I'll drive a hint into that thick skull of yours. I suppose you know that Sir Lucas Taaffe is dead?"

"Every one knows it, Your Honor," whined Bagshaw. "The news of his death is the talk of Boyle."

"Very well, then! Suppose you watch Taaffe Hall? At such a time the friar is not likely to be absent from there, with his pretty cousin in distress. He'll be buried to-morrow at Killoonan Abbey, so you might be on the lookout for strangers. Do you follow me?"

"I do, Your Honor," growled Bill. "And you, Birmingham, do you understand?" went on the Viscount.

"I do, Your Honor."

"Very well, then. A nod as good as a wink to a blind horse. I'll expect to hear from you here the evening of the funeral."

And he dismissed the twain.

"What do you say, Bill? Are you going to Taaffe Hall?" asked Birmingham.

"Are you?" queried Bill.

"No, not I," answered Birmingham. "I take no shock in such stories. The friar's not likely to be there with the whole country, Catholic an' Protestant, flockin' to the Hall to pay their respects to the dead."

"Do as you please," snorted Bill. "But I'm goin' to watch the Hall this very night."

"'Twill be a wild-goose chase, I'm thinkin'," smiled Birmingham.

"Think as you please, but I'll do it," growled Bill as the worthies parted on the bridge of Boyle.

When Bill had left him, Jack Birmingham went his way to the Green. There he entered the whitewashed cottage and was greeted with a smile by Mary Fanshawe.

"Mary," said he excitedly. "I've more news for you."

"What is it?" queried the girl eagerly.

"You told me that Father O'Rourke was hidin' at Trinity Island and that you warned him away from there yesterday."

"Well, what of it," asked Mary.

"Well, to make a pretense of doin' my duty, I went to the island this mornin', meself, an' found this book—a priest's book."

"You did?" questioned Mary, in astonishment. "You surely aren't playin' thraitor, Jack Birmingham?"

"Nonsense, but I did it to clear my conscience with Lord Kingscourt. He thinks I'm not on the scent of the priest, and he regards this book, which the priest must have dropped, as good evidence. The truth is, Mary, Bagshaw's watchin' the priest and I'm watchin' Bagshaw, so's I'll counterfoil him. Now, Mary, if Father O'Rourke's at Taaffe Hall—an' he's likely to be there, with his uncle dead—go at once, this very hour, an' tell him to leave. Bagshaw an' meself have just come from Kingscourt, and Lord Kingscourt has ordered us to watch the Hall till after the funeral. I tried to dissuade Bagshaw from goin' there, 'cause 'tis a fool's errand," said I, but he's goin' there this very night. An' he has orders to take the priest dead or alive. As for me, I'll not stir hand or foot in the dirty work, except to throw Bill off the trail. An' it's all for you, Mary."

The girl arose with a smile and approached Birmingham, a light in her eyes that made the young man's heart beat fast.

"Jack," she said, putting her arms about his neck, "Jack, I thank you. I had a Protestant father and a Catholic mother. I remained a Protestant until this same Father O'Rourke, when he was here in Ireland before, brought me back to the old faith. For that great grace I'm his servant forever. And because you're loyal at last to the faith of your dead parents, which for a long time you forsook and engaged in priest-hunting, an' because you put me in the way of savin' Father O'Rourke—oh, Jack, I love you. I loved you all the time, but I could-

n't admit it until you changed your evil ways."

"'Twas you made me change, Mary," blurted Jack huskily. "And I'll never again do anything but save the priests, so help me, God!"

"I'm proud of you, Jack, and now I hate Bagshaw worse than ever. He thinks because he has a bag of dirty gold and I'm an orphan girl that he can have me any time he likes. He's been comin' after me these two years, but I hate the ground he walks on, and won't forget to tell him so, next time he comes deluderin' me. God bless you, Jack! I'm goin' this very minute to Taaffe Hall!"

Jack released her, and she took down her cloak, filled a basket with eggs, and under the pretense of marketing her wares to Miss Christine, set off for the Hall.

It lay several miles from Boyle, between Lough Key and Lough Arrow, and the road led through the passes of the Curlew Mountains, famous in the Elizabethan wars for the disastrous defeat of Sir Conyers Clifford by Red Hugh O'Donnell. It was gathering dusk when Mary Fanshawe reached the darkened house. Men on horseback had passed her at intervals—gentlemen of the country hurrying thither with sympathy and condolence. Once a chaise with emblazoned panels, postillions and outriders had stopped to enquire of her way—some great lord, doubtless, who lived afar, yet had travelled through rain and mud to pay his respects to the memory of Sir Lucas Taaffe, who in the cloaked and hooded girl, basket on arm, made an incongruous figure amid the powdered dames and broad-clothed gallants when, finally, she was ushered into the wide entrance hall, enquiring earnestly for Miss Christine.

"Ah, then," said the cook, when he had finished, "you come too late. If you were here two hours earlier you'd ha' found the priest hidin'—God bless an' save him from informers an' spies!"

"Amen, amen, asthor!" sighed the beggar. "But if ye should chancst to know where he's hidin', I'm sure ye'll let him know."

"It's more than likely that poor Miss Christine, the heart-broken colleen, knows where he went. I'll spake to her when I get a chance. Of course she's too much taken up now with the gentry and the high quality in the house, comin' an' goin' from mornin' till night to pay their respects to him that's dead—God rest his soul!"

"Thank you, ma'am, thank you. You wor ever kind an' good, an' if you wor doin' anything for poor Miss Blake 'twill be a charity—a great charity out an' out," replied the beggar.

"I don't think we can do anything till after the funeral to-morrow," said the cook. "Miss Christine'll be too busy, distressed an' all as she is now, poor little colleen! But do you think Mr. Blake's that bad that he'll need the priest at once?"

"Well, maybe he'll last a couple of days longer. At last the man thought so," said the man cogitatively. "But the sooner the friar's found the better," he added. "Of course, if nothing can be done till after the Master's funeral—an' it's reasonable to suppose there can't—it may be just as well. At all events, I know ye'll do yer best, an' may God bless ye all. I've done my part any way, and ye'll do the rest, I'm sure."

"Deed, then, we will. You may be sure of that. But, my poor man, as the beggar rose to go, 'ye'll be hungry on the way and ye'll want a bite.' So hand me yer bag."

The poor man gladly surrendered his bag to her solicitous hands, which placed in it a roast fowl, a loaf of bread and some cold meat.

"God bless ye this night!" he murmured at the kitchen door, hat in hand, "bless ye and save ye an' always send ye full and plenty!"

After which, shouldering his bag and taking his staff, he hobbled out of the kitchen yard and was lost amid the trees.

It was a warm harvest night, and the sweet smell of after-grass and newly mown meadows was in the air. The beggar rounded from the stables and out-houses back of the Hall and emerged into the avenue, chequered with moonlight. There, close to the main entrance, he lay down in a clump of ornamental shrubbery, safely screened from view by the dense foliage of the laurels, but clearly in sight of the door and all who came and went.

All that night he lay there, not sleeping, but keenly alert, his eye on the hall door. No one passed it after midnight, and in the morning, when the larks began to quiver and carol heavenward, he arose and sought a neighboring field. There in the shelter of the haystack he ate his roast fowl and awaited until about noon, a shrill wailing of women's voices came over the field. It was the signal of the funeral, and in an instant the beggar was on his feet. But now he stood actively erect, discarded his staff, and with surprising agility crossed the field broke through the hedge to the Killoonan road and went along that highway at a rapid gait. When some miles away, he reached the gray ruins of Killoonan Abbey with the circumjacent graveyard, he once more resumed his staff and there at the gate he stood, mournful, mendicant and dejected, the picture of abject misery in his patched cloak and venerable white hair.

Hat in hand he stood thus, until, heralded by the knocking ululations of the women, the funeral home in sight—along a cortege of gentlemen on horseback, riding two abreast, their hats draped in streaming white, the manes of their horses beribboned in white, followed by coaches and chaises with emblazoned panels containing the ladies of the country families, and the tenantry of Sir Lucas trailing afoot and bearing in their midst on the shoulders of four young men the black-palmed coffin of Sir Lucas Taaffe.

An hour after Father O'Rourke had bidden a hasty and affecting farewell to his tearful cousin, a way-worn traveller, who had evidently journeyed afar, to judge by his mud-spattered rearmet, knocked for admission at Taaffe Hall. He was clearly of the mendicant class, who tramped afoot from town to town, subsisting on the charity of the country. An old man, wrinkled and bowed with years, he carried a bag on his back and supported himself with a stout staff. His long gray hair, his tattered cloak, like Joseph's coat in its multiplicity of patches, his venerable

appearance and his voluble prayers for the soul of the dead Sir Lucas won him easy admission to the kitchen on the Hall, where he was regaled on a good meal, after which he unfolded to the rosy, good-natured cook the prime purpose of his visit.

"I heard in Boyle that Sir Lucas was dead, God rest his soul, for he was ever a kind friend to the poor and distressed. The laughey gentleman he was, indeed, may God give him the light of glory in his blessed night! And, of course, passin' this way on me way to Sligo, it would ill-beseem me not to turn aside and say a prayer for his soul, may the heavens be his bed! But I had another reason for comin' here, an' 'twill be a charity if any of ye kind good people can help me. I came by Castlereagh, yesterday mornin', an' in the town I met the coachman of friend Nicholas Blake—an' old friend of Sir Lucas. He was lookin' for a priest and said that Mr. Blake was on the point of death and beggin' some one to find him a holy soggarth before he died. 'The Lord bless ye,' sez I, 'there's ne'er a priest in these parts. I've travelled all the country over an' over an' ought to know. But, sez I, 'I hear that Sir Lucas Taaffe has a nephew who's a holy friar, an' I'm goin' that way I'll stop at the Hall an' have word to have the priest sent to Mister Blake. It's more than likely,' sez I, 'that some one at the Hall 'll know where this Father O'Rourke, the nephew, is, an', of course, 'in all good Catholics, they'll only be too glad to help a dyin' man.' So that's me chief reason for bein' here now."

"Ah, then," said the cook, when he had finished, "you come too late. If you were here two hours earlier you'd ha' found the priest hidin'—God bless an' save him from informers an' spies!"

"Amen, amen, asthor!" sighed the beggar. "But if ye should chancst to know where he's hidin', I'm sure ye'll let him know."

"It's more than likely that poor Miss Christine, the heart-broken colleen, knows where he went. I'll spake to her when I get a chance. Of course she's too much taken up now with the gentry and the high quality in the house, comin' an' goin' from mornin' till night to pay their respects to him that's dead—God rest his soul!"

"Thank you, ma'am, thank you. You wor ever kind an' good, an' if you wor doin' anything for poor Miss Blake 'twill be a charity—a great charity out an' out," replied the beggar.

"I don't think we can do anything till after the funeral to-morrow," said the cook. "Miss Christine'll be too busy, distressed an' all as she is now, poor little colleen! But do you think Mr. Blake's that bad that he'll need the priest at once?"

"Well, maybe he'll last a couple of days longer. At last the man thought so," said the man cogitatively. "But the sooner the friar's found the better," he added. "Of course, if nothing can be done till after the Master's funeral—an' it's reasonable to suppose there can't—it may be just as well. At all events, I know ye'll do yer best, an' may God bless ye all. I've done my part any way, and ye'll do the rest, I'm sure."

"Deed, then, we will. You may be sure of that. But, my poor man, as the beggar rose to go, 'ye'll be hungry on the way and ye'll want a bite.' So hand me yer bag."

The poor man gladly surrendered his bag to her solicitous hands, which placed in it a roast fowl, a loaf of bread and some cold meat.

"God bless ye this night!" he murmured at the kitchen door, hat in hand, "bless ye and save ye an' always send ye full and plenty!"

After which, shouldering his bag and taking his staff, he hobbled out of the kitchen yard and was lost amid the trees.

It was a warm harvest night, and the sweet smell of after-grass and newly mown meadows was in the air. The beggar rounded from the stables and out-houses back of the Hall and emerged into the avenue, chequered with moonlight. There, close to the main entrance, he lay down in a clump of ornamental shrubbery, safely screened from view by the dense foliage of the laurels, but clearly in sight of the door and all who came and went.

All that night he lay there, not sleeping, but keenly alert, his eye on the hall door. No one passed it after midnight, and in the morning, when the larks began to quiver and carol heavenward, he arose and sought a neighboring field. There in the shelter of the haystack he ate his roast fowl and awaited until about noon, a shrill wailing of women's voices came over the field. It was the signal of the funeral, and in an instant the beggar was on his feet. But now he stood actively erect, discarded his staff, and with surprising agility crossed the field broke through the hedge to the Killoonan road and went along that highway at a rapid gait. When some miles away, he reached the gray ruins of Killoonan Abbey with the circumjacent graveyard, he once more resumed his staff and there at the gate he stood, mournful, mendicant and dejected, the picture of abject misery in his patched cloak and venerable white hair.

Hat in hand he stood thus, until, heralded by the knocking ululations of the women, the funeral home in sight—along a cortege of gentlemen on horseback, riding two abreast, their hats draped in streaming white, the manes of their horses beribboned in white, followed by coaches and chaises with emblazoned panels containing the ladies of the country families, and the tenantry of Sir Lucas trailing afoot and bearing in their midst on the shoulders of four young men the black-palmed coffin of Sir Lucas Taaffe.

An hour after Father O'Rourke had bidden a hasty and affecting farewell to his tearful cousin, a way-worn traveller, who had evidently journeyed afar, to judge by his mud-spattered rearmet, knocked for admission at Taaffe Hall. He was clearly of the mendicant class, who tramped afoot from town to town, subsisting on the charity of the country. An old man, wrinkled and bowed with years, he carried a bag on his back and supported himself with a stout staff. His long gray hair, his tattered cloak, like Joseph's coat in its multiplicity of patches, his venerable

appearance and his voluble prayers for the soul of the dead Sir Lucas won him easy admission to the kitchen on the Hall, where he was regaled on a good meal, after which he unfolded to the rosy, good-natured cook the prime purpose of his visit.

"I heard in Boyle that Sir Lucas was dead, God rest his soul, for he was ever a kind friend to the poor and distressed. The laughey gentleman he was, indeed, may God give him the light of glory in his blessed night! And, of course, passin' this way on me way to Sligo, it would ill-beseem me not to turn aside and say a prayer for his soul, may the heavens be his bed! But I had another reason for comin' here, an' 'twill be a charity if any of ye kind good people can help me. I came by Castlereagh, yesterday mornin', an' in the town I met the coachman of friend Nicholas Blake—an' old friend of Sir Lucas. He was lookin' for a priest and said that Mr. Blake was on the point of death and beggin' some one to find him a holy soggarth before he died. 'The Lord bless ye,' sez I, 'there's ne'er a priest in these parts. I've travelled all the country over an' over an' ought to know. But, sez I, 'I hear that Sir Lucas Taaffe has a nephew who's a holy friar, an' I'm goin' that way I'll stop at the Hall an' have word to have the priest sent to Mister Blake. It's more than likely,' sez I, 'that some one at the Hall 'll know where this Father O'Rourke, the nephew, is, an', of course, 'in all good Catholics, they'll only be too glad to help a dyin' man.' So that's me chief reason for bein' here now."

"Ah, then," said the cook, when he had finished, "you come too late. If you were here two hours earlier you'd ha' found the priest hidin'—God bless an' save him from informers an' spies!"

"Amen, amen, asthor!" sighed the beggar. "But if ye should chancst to know where he's hidin', I'm sure ye'll let him know."

"It's more than likely that poor Miss Christine, the heart-broken colleen, knows where he went. I'll spake to her when I get a chance. Of course she's too much taken up now with the gentry and the high quality in the house, comin' an' goin' from mornin' till night to pay their respects to him that's dead—God rest his soul!"

"Thank you, ma'am, thank you. You wor ever kind an' good, an' if you wor doin' anything for poor Miss Blake 'twill be a charity—a great charity out an' out," replied the beggar.

"I don't think we can do anything till after the funeral to-morrow," said the cook. "Miss Christine'll be too busy, distressed an' all as she is now, poor little colleen! But do you think Mr. Blake's that bad that he'll need the priest at once?"

"Well, maybe he'll last a couple of days longer. At last the man thought so," said the man cogitatively. "But the sooner the friar's found the better," he added. "Of course, if nothing can be done till after the Master's funeral—an' it's reasonable to suppose there can't—it may be just as well. At all events, I know ye'll do yer best, an' may God bless ye all. I've done my part any way, and ye'll do the rest, I'm sure."

"Deed, then, we will. You may be sure of that. But, my poor man, as the beggar rose to go, 'ye'll be hungry on the way and ye'll want a bite.' So hand me yer bag."

The poor man gladly surrendered his bag to her solicitous hands, which placed in it a roast fowl, a loaf of bread and some cold meat.

"God bless ye this night!" he murmured at the kitchen door, hat in hand, "bless ye and save ye an' always send ye full and plenty!"

After which, shouldering his bag and taking his staff, he hobbled out of the kitchen yard and was lost amid the trees.

It was a warm harvest night, and the sweet smell of after-grass and newly mown meadows was in the air. The beggar rounded from the stables and out-houses back of the Hall and emerged into the avenue, chequered with moonlight. There, close to the main entrance, he lay down in a clump of ornamental shrubbery, safely screened from view by the dense foliage of the laurels, but clearly in sight of the door and all who came and went.

All that night he lay there, not sleeping, but keenly alert, his eye on the hall door. No one passed it after midnight, and in the morning, when the larks began to quiver and carol heavenward, he arose and sought a neighboring field. There in the shelter of the haystack he ate his roast fowl and awaited until about noon, a shrill wailing of women's voices came over the field. It was the signal of the funeral, and in an instant the beggar was on his feet. But now he stood actively erect, discarded his staff, and with surprising agility crossed the field broke through the hedge to the Killoonan road and went along that highway at a rapid gait. When some miles away, he reached the gray ruins of Killoonan Abbey with the circumjacent graveyard, he once more resumed his staff and there at the gate he stood