

his life to the nearest house, which, unluckily, happened to be the Lodge. Two boys, however, saw and recognised him as he entered the demesne, and raised a whoop, to show that they knew where the fox had gone to ground.

This we made out from a string of incoherent interjection; and then he lay, panting and convulsing himself in an agony of fear.

Mohun sat on the hall-table, swinging his foot and regarding the spectacle with the indolent curiosity that one might exhibit towards the gambols of some ugly new importation of the Zoological Society. When the story was told, he pointed coolly to the door.

The shriek that the miserable creature set up, on seeing that gesture, I shall never forget.

'Do you think I shall turn my house into a refuge for destitute attorneys?' Ralph said, answering my look of inquiry. 'If there were no other reason, I would not risk it, with your wife under my roof. A night-attack in the West is no child's play!'

Kate had come out, and was leaning over the gallery; she heard the last words, and spoke, flushing scarlet with anger.

'If I thought that my presence prevented an act of common humanity, I would leave your house this instant, Colonel Mohun.'

Ralph smiled slightly, as he bent his head in courteous acknowledgment of her interruption.

'Don't be indignant, Mrs. Carew. If you have a fancy for such an excitement, I shall be too happy to indulge you. It is settled, then? We back the attorney. Don't lie there sir, looking so like a whipped hound. You hear? You are safe for the present.' He had hardly finished, when there came a rustling of feet outside, then hurried whispers, then a knock, and a summons.

'We'd like to speak with the Curlew, ay ye please.'

'I am here; what do you want?' Mohun growled.

'We want the 'orney. We know he's within.'

'Then I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. It's not my fancy to give him up. I would turn out a badger to you, let alone a man.'

You see, he took the high moral ground, now.

'Then we'll have him out, in spite of yez, two or three voices cried out together.

'Try it!' Ralph said. 'Meantime I am going to dine; good night.'

A voice that had not spoken yet was heard, with a shrill, gibing accent. 'Ah, thin, the best of appetites to yez, Curlew, darlin'! and make haste over yer dinner. It's Pierce Delaney that'll give yez supper.' Then they went off.

'The said Delaney is a huge quarryman,' Ralph observed. 'He represents the physical element of terror hereabouts, as I believe I do the moral. We shall have warm work before morning. He does not like me. Fritz, send Connell up; he is below, somewhere.'

The keeper came, looking very much surprised. He had been in the stables, and had only just heard of the disturbance.

'Get the rifles and guns ready, with bullets and buck-shot,' his master said. 'We are to be attacked, it seems.'

The man's bold face fell, blankly.

'By the powers, yer honour, I haven't the value of an ounce of powder in the house. I meant to get some the morrow mornin', afore ye were up.'

Mohun shrugged his shoulders, whistling softly.

'Man proposes,' he said. 'It's almost a pity we found so many corks in the Lower Cope this afternoon. I have fifteen charges or so in my pistol case. We must make that do, loading the rifles light.' Then he went to a window, whence he could see down the road; the moon was shining brightly.

'I thought so; they have got scouts posted already. The barbarians know something of skirmishing after all. Maddox, come here.' (The groom was a strong English boy, very much afraid of his master, but of nothing else on earth.) 'Saddle Sunbeam, and go out by the back gates, keeping well under the shadow of the trees. When you clear them, ride straight at the rails at the end of the paddock. You'll get over with a scramble, I think—keep fast hold of his head—you mustn't fall. Then make the best of your way to A——, and tell Colonel Harding, with my compliments, that I shall be glad if he will send over a troop as quickly as possible. They ought to be here in two hours. And mind, don't spare the horse going, but bring him back easy. You will be of no use here, and I won't have him lamed if I can help it. You'll have to risk a bullet or two as you get into the road; but they can't shoot. It's odds against their hitting you. Now, go.'

The groom pulled his forelock as if the most ordinary commission had been given him, and vanished.

'Connell,' Ralph went on, 'go and saw the ladders that are in the yard half-through. They will hardly try the larded windows; but it looks more worklike to take all precautions. Then come back, and help Fitz to pile chairs and furniture all up the staircase, and about the hall near it. Line the gallery with mattresses, two deep, leaving spaces to fire through. Light all the lamps, and get more candles to fix about; we shall not see very clearly after the smoke of the first dozen shots. When you have finished come to me. Now shall we go back to dinner?'

I am not ashamed to own I had little appetite; nevertheless, I sat down. Kate had gone to her room. If her courage was failing, she did not wish to show it.

Suddenly our host got up, and went to the window. His practised ear had caught the tread of the horse which Maddox was taking out as quietly as possible. We watched him stealing along under the trees, till their shelter failed him. Then he put Sunbeam to speed, and rode boldly at the rails. A yell went up from the road, and we saw dark figures rumbling; then came a shot, just as the horse was rising at the fence. He hit it hard, and the splinters flew up, while in the moonlight; but he was over. We held our breath, while several flashes told of dropping shots, after the fugitive. The did not stop him, though; and to our great relief, we heard the wild rush of frightened horses subside into a long stretching gallop, and the wind brought back a cheery hallo—'Forr'ard, forr'ard away!'

'So far, so good,' said Ralph Mohun, as he sat down again, and went in steadily at a woodcock. 'Don't hurry yourselves, gentlemen. We've three-quarters of an hour yet; they will take that time to muster! Contarf, some hock?'

The boy to whom he spoke held out his glass with a pleasant smile. The coming peril had not altered a tint on his fresh, boardless cheeks—rosy and clear as a page's in one of Boucher's pictures.

A good contrast he made with the miserable attorney, who had followed us uninvited (it seemed he only felt safe in our presence), and who was crouching in a corner, his lank hair plastered round his livid convulsed face with the sweat of mortal fear.

It struck Mohun, I think. He laid his hand on Clontarf's shoulder, and spoke with a kindness of voice and manner most unusual to him—

'We'll quell the savage mountaineer,
As their Tinchell cove the game;
They come, as fleet as forest deer;
We'll drive them back, as tame.'

Even at that anxious moment, I could not help laughing at the idea of Ralph quoting poetry—at that grim Saul among the prophets.

I went in to keep up Kate's spirits. She bore up gallantly, poor child, and I left her tolerably calm. She believed in me, as 'a plunger, to an enormous extent, and in Mohun still more. When I returned, my companions were in the gallery. This ran around two sides of the hall, which went up to the roof. The only access to the upper part of the house was by a stone staircase of a single flight. The kitchen and offices were on the ground floor, otherwise it was unindented.

Ralph had his pistols by him, and his cavalry sword, long and heavy but admirably poised, lay within his reach.

'I have settled it,' he said. 'You and Connell are to take the guns. Smooth bores are quickest loaded, and will do for this short distance. Clontarf, who is not quite so sure with the trigger, is to have the post of honour and guard the staircase with his sabre. Throw another bucket of water over it, Connell—is it thoroughly drenched? And draw the windows up' (these did not reach to within ten feet of the floor) 'we shall be stifled else. But there will be a thorough draught when the door's down, that's one comfort. One word with you, Carew.'

He drew me aside, and spoke almost in a whisper while his face was grave and stern.

'You will do me this justice, whatever happens. Unless it had been forced upon me, I would not have risked a hair of your wife's head to save all the attorneys that are patronized by the Father of lies. But, mark me, if it comes to the worst, keep back a bullet for her. Don't leave her to the mercy of those savage devils. I know them. She had better die ten times over, than fall into their brutal hands. You must use your own discretion though. I shall not be able to advise you then. Not a man of them will be in this gallery till I am past praying for. Nevertheless, I hope and believe all will be right. Don't trouble yourself to reload, Fritz will do that for you. I have given him his orders. Aim very coolly, too; we must not waste a bullet. You can choose your own sword; there are several behind you. Ah, I hear them coming up. Now men, to your posts.'

There was the tramp of many feet, and the surging of a crowd about and against the hall-door. Then a harsh, loud voice spoke—

'Once for all, will ye give him up, or shall we take him, and serve the rest of yez as bad? Ye've got women there, too—'

I will not add the rest of the threat for very shame. I know it made me more wolfish than ever I thought it possible to feel; for I am a good-natured man in the main. Mohun, who is not, hit his moustache furiously, and his voice shook a little, as he answered—

'Do you ever see a prayer, Pierce Delaney? You need one now. If you live to see to-morrow's sunset, I wish my right hand may wither at the wrist.'

A shrill howl pealed out from the assailants, and then the stout oak door cracked and quivered under the strokes of a heavy battering-ram; in a hundred seconds the hinges yielded, and it came clattering in; over it leaped three wild figures, bearing torches and pikes; but their chief, Delaney, was not one of them.

The left-hand man is yours, Carew; Connell, take the middle one,' said Ralph, as if we had sprung a pack of grouse. While he spoke his pistol cracked, and the right-hand intruder dropped across the threshold without a cry or a stagger, shot right through the brain. The keeper and I were nearly as fortunate. Then there was a pause; then a rush from without, an irregular discharge of musketry, and the clear part of the hall was crowded with enemies.

I can't tell exactly what ensued. I know they retreated several times, for the barricade was impossible; and while their shots fell harmlessly on the mattresses, every one of ours told—nothing makes a man shoot straight if he is short of powder—but they came on again, each time with added ferocity.

I heard Mohun mutter more than once, in a dissatisfied tone, 'why does not that scoundrel show himself?—I can't make out Delaney.' All at once I heard a stifled cry on my right, and, to my horror, I saw Clontarf dragged over the balustrade in the gripe of a giant, while I guessed at once to be the man we had looked for so long. Under cover of the smoke he had swung himself up by the balustrade of the staircase, and grasping the poor boy's collar as he looked out incautiously from his shelter, dropped back into the hall, carrying his victim with him.

(To be Continued.)

FORGOTTEN.

In this dim shadow where
She found the quiet which all tired hearts crave,
Now, without grief or care,
The wild bees murmur, and the blossoms wave,
And the forgetful air
Blows heedlessly across her grassy grave.

Yet, when she lived on earth,
She loved this leafy dell, and knew by name
All things of sylvan birth;
Squirrel and bird chirped welcome, when she came:
Yet now, in careless mirth,
They frisk, and build, and warble all the same.

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