

municated by a private road with the public one, which crossed the stream about an eighth of a mile farther on. Turning the corner of the barn, Coristine saw a gray-haired woman, and a clean shaven man in clerical garb, leaning over the prostrate figure of Ben.

"Are you a doctor, sir?" asked the tearful woman, rising and coming towards him.

"Not exactly, Ma'am," replied the lawyer; "but perhaps I may be of use."

He then leaned over the sick man, and saw that he not only breathed, but had his eyes open upon the world in quite a sensible way. "What is the matter?" he asked the reverend gentleman, who was also contemplating the recumbent Toner.

"He says his back is sore, paralyzed, and that he can't move a limb," replied the priest in an unprofessional tone.

"How did it happen, Mr. Toner?" enquired the lawyer; and Ben, in a feeble and husky voice, replied:—

"I was rollin' quite a load on the slaant, when I got ketched with a back sprain, and the load slipped and knocked me down, and rolled over my stummick. That's all."

"Quite enough for one time," said Coristine; "is there such a thing as a loose door, or some boards we can make into a stretcher, anywhere about? Ben called to his mother to show the doctor where the door was that he was going to put on the hen-yard. This was soon found, and a blanket or two being laid upon it, the clergyman and the improvised doctor transferred the groaning patient to it, and so carried him into the house, where they undressed him and put him to bed on his face. "Say, doctor, I'll choke like this," came from the bed in the sick man's muffled voice, to the lawyer, who was ordering the widow to get some hot water and provide herself with towels or cotton cloths. "No you won't, Toner; turn your head to one side," he called. "That's better," remarked the patient, as he took advantage of the permission, and then continued: "I'd like ef you'd call me Ben, doctor, not Toner; seems as ef I'd git better sooner that way." Coristine answered, "All right, Ben," and withdrew to a corner with the priest for consultation. "What's the matter?" asked the priest, in a business-like, unsympathetic tone.

"So, you give me back my question. Well, as the water will be some time getting ready, and it will do our man no harm to feel serious for a few minutes more, I'll go into it with your reverence homeopathically. The root of his trouble is a whiskey back. That accidentally led to a muscular strain, involving something a little more paralyzing than lumbago. He has no bones broken in that strong frame of his, but the grindstones have bruised him abdominally. I hope my treatment for the root of the disease will be more successful than that of the oriental physician, who prescribed for a man that had a pain in his stomach, caused by eating burnt bread. The physician anointed him with eye salve, because he said the root of the disease lay in his eyes; had they been all right, he would not have eaten the burnt bread, and consequently would not have had the pains."

The priest chuckled beneath his breath over the story; then, with earnestness, asked, or rather whispered: "Will he get well soon?"

"Well enough, I think, to sit up in half-an-hour," replied the doctor of the moment.

"My dear sir, may I ask you to delay your treatment until I perform a religious office with your patient? This is a favourable time for making an impression," said the hitherto callous priest.

"Certainly, Father, only be short, for he is suffering physically, and worse from apprehension."

"I shall require all persons, but the one to whom I give the comforts of religion, to leave the room," called the priest aloud.

"It isn't the unction, Father?" cried Ben, piteously.

"Oh, doctor, the boy's not going to die?" besought the mother, at the boiler on the stove.

"I can answer for his reverence and myself," replied the lawyer; "he will not administer the last rites of the Church to the living, nor will I let my patient die."

Then he and the widow retired, as the priest took out a book, knelt by the bedside, and opened it. The reverend gentleman, however, was in too great a hurry to begin, and too little sensible how far his penetrating voice would carry, for, at the first words of the prayer, Coristine made an indignant start and frowned terribly. The words he heard were: "Oratio pro sickibus, in articulo mortis, repentant shouldere omnes transgressores et confessionem makere ———."

He felt inclined to rush in and turn the impudent impostor and profaner of the sacred office out of the house neck and crop, especially as the poor mother took him by the arm, and, with broken voice through her tears, said: "O, doctor, doctor, it's the last words he's taking!" But his legal training acted as a check on his impetuosity, and, standing where he was, he answered the grief-stricken woman: "Never fear, Mrs. Toner, you and I will pull him through," which greatly comforted the widow's heart.

Five minutes passed by Coristine's watch, and then he determined to stand the nonsense no longer. He coughed, stamped his feet, and finally walked in at the door, followed by the widow. The pseudo priest was sitting on a chair now, listening to the penitent's confidences. "Time is up," said the lawyer fiercely, and the impostor arose, resumed his three-cornered black wideawake, pocketed his

book, which really was a large pocket-book full of notes in pencil, and expressed his regret at leaving, as he had another family, a very sad case, to visit that night. As he passed Coristine, the latter refused his proffered hand and hissed in his ear: "You are the most damnable scoundrel I ever met, and I'll serve you out for this with the penitentiary." The masquerader grinned unclerically, his back being to the other occupants of the house, and whispered back, "Not much you won't, no nor the halfpenny-tentary either; bye-bye!"

"How are you feeling, Ben?" the lawyer asked the sick man, as he approached his bedside.

"Powerful weak and so-er," replied the patient.

Coristine called the mother, poured some St. Jacob's Oil into the palm of her hand, and bade her rub down her son's back at the small. "Rub hard!" he said; and she rubbed it in. Three or four more doses followed, till the back was a fine healthy colour.

"How does that work, Ben?"

"It smarts some, but I can wriggle my back a bit."

Then the doctor poured some whiskey out of his flask in the same way and it was applied.

"Do you think you can turn round now?" he asked; and, at once, the patient revolved, lying in a more convenient and seemly position.

"Bring the hot clothes, Mrs. Toner, and lay them on the bruised part, as hot as he can stand it. The patient growled a little when the clothes were abdominally applied, one after the other, but they warmed him up, and even, as he said, 'haylpd his back.'

"Now, Ben, when did you take whiskey last?"

"I ain't had nary a drop the hull of this blessed day."

"Is that true?"

"Gawspel truth, doctor, so haylp me."

"If you don't promise me to quit drinking, I can do nothing for you."

"But he will promise, doctor; won't you now, Benny dear?" eagerly asked the mother.

"Yaas!" groaned the sufferer, with a new hot cloth on him; "yaas; I guess I'll have to."

Then, the perfidious doctor emptied his flask into a glass, and poured in enough oil to disguise its taste. Adding a little water, he gave the dose as medicine to the unconscious victim, who took it off manfully, and naturally felt almost himself again.

"Have you plenty coal-oil in the house, Mrs. Toner?" enquired the family physician; and the widow replied that she had. "Rub the afflicted parts with it, till they will absorb no more; then let him sleep till morning, when he can get up and go about light work. But, mind, there's to be no lifting of heavy weights for three days, and no whiskey at all."

With these words, Coristine received the woman's warm expressions of gratitude, and departed.

Tommy had gone, so the lawyer had to go back to the Inn alone, and in the dark. He turned the barn, before which one bundle of grindstones still lay, the one, apparently, that had floored Ben. Then he made his way along a path bordered with dewy grass, that did not seem quite familiar, so that he rejoiced when he arrived at the road and the bridge. But, both road and bridge were new to him, and there was no Maple Inn. He now saw that he had taken the wrong turning at the barn, and was preparing to retrace his steps, when a sound of approaching wheels and loud voices arrested him. On came the wag-gons, three in number, the horses urged to their utmost by drunken drivers, in whom he recognized the men that he and Wilkinson had met before they took the road to the Inn. Coristine was standing on the road close by the bridge as they drove up, but, as the man with the first team aimed a blow at him with his whip, he drew back towards the fence. "Shoot the d—d spy, boys," the ruffian cried to the fellows behind him, and, as they slackened their speed, the lawyer jumped the fence to put some solid obstacle between himself and their revolvers, which, he knew, they were only too ready to use. At that moment a horseman rode towards the party from the other side of the bridge, and, while aiming a blow with a stout stick at the first scoundrel, a blow that was effectual, called to the others, in a voice of authority, to put up their pistols. "O Lord, boys, it's Nash; drive on," called one, and they whipped up their patient animals and rattled away in a desperate hurry. "You can come out now, Mr. Coristine," said the horseman; "the coast is clear."

"You have the advantage of me, sir," remarked the lawyer, as he vaulted back again into the road.

"No I have not," replied the other; "you called me a damnable scoundrel, and threatened me with the penitentiary, a little while ago. How's Toner?"

"I am obliged for your interference just now on my behalf, but must decline any intercourse with one who has been guilty of what I regard as most dishonourable conduct, profaning the sacred name of religion in order to compass some infamous private end."

"My ends, Mr. Coristine, are public, not private, nor are they infamous, but for the good of the community and the individuals composing it. I know your firm, Tylor, Woodruff and White, and your firm knows me, Internal Revenue Detective Nash."

"What! are you the celebrated Mr. Nash of the Penetang Bush Raid?" asked the lawyer, curiosity, and admiration of the man's skill and courage, overcoming his aversion to the latest detective trick.

"The same at your service, and, as the best thing I can do for you is to take you to your Inn, a dry way out of

the dew, you can get on my beast, and I'll walk for a rest," replied the detective, alighting.

Coristine was tired, so, after a little pressing, he accepted the mount, and, of course, found it impossible to refuse his confidence to the man whose horse he was riding.

"What did you do with your clerical garb?" he asked.

"Have it on," replied Nash; "it's a great make up. This coat of black cord has a lot of turned up and turned down tag ends, the same with the vest, and the soft hat can be knocked into any shape with a diff of the fist. With these, and three collars, and moustache, beard, and whiskers, that I carry in my pocket, I can assume half-a-dozen characters and more."

"How do you justify your assumption of the priestly character?"

"I want information, and assume any character to get it, in every case being guilty of deception. You think my last rôle unjustifiable because of the confessional. Had I simulated a Methodist parson, or a Presbyterian minister, or a Church of England divine, you would have thought much less of it; and yet, if there is any bad in the thing, the one is as bad as the other. Personally, I regard the confessional as a piece of superstitious ecclesiastical machinery, and am ready to utilize it, like any other superstition, for the purpose of obtaining information. Talk about personating the clergy; I have even been bold enough to appear as a lawyer, a quaker, a college professor, a sailor, and an actress."

"You have certainly led me to modify my opinion of your last performance."

"Which nearly gave me away. So you won't send me to the penitentiary; thanks! And now, as I said at first, how's Toner?"

"Oh, Toner's all right, with the fieriest skin on him that ever lay between two sheets. He has promised to give up drinking."

"It's very likely he'll have to."

"Why so?"

"They don't allow refreshments so strong in gaol."

"Be as easy as you can with the poor fellow, Mr. Nash."

"All depends on his future behaviour, and, in some other capacity, I shall let him know his danger."

As the two figures came down the road toward the Inn, a voice hailed them, the voice of the dominie. "Is Mr. Coristine there?" it shouted.

"Yes; here am I," came from the back of the horse.

"What bones are broken or wounds received?" was the pitiful but correct question.

"Not a bone nor a wound. Mr. Nash has treated me to a ride."

"Aw ça!" ejaculated Pierre, "M'syae Nasha homme treh subtil, treh rusé, conneh tout le monde, fait pear aux mauveh sujah."

"What is he?" asked the schoolmaster, speaking English, in his eagerness; and the landlord replied in the same.

"Ee is vat you call detecteur, police offisare vis no close on 'im. Anysing vas to go in ze custom house and goes not, he find it out. O, a veray clevaire mann!"

Coristine dismounted for the purpose of introducing his companion. Personally, he would as readily have performed this office on horseback, but he knew that the schoolmaster was a stickler for ceremony. While the introduction was going on, Pierre took Mr. Nash's horse by the bridle, and led the procession home. There, Madame stood in the porch eagerly waiting for news of "ce jeune homme si courageux, si benveillont," and was delighted to hear that he was safe, and that Mr. Nash, an old acquaintance, was with him. When the party entered the house, Wilkinson looked at the detective, and then, with a start, said: "Why, you are Dowling, the Dowling who came to the Sacheverell Street School, with a peremptory letter from the trustees, to take the lower division boys, and disappeared in ten days."

"The same, Mr. Wilkinson; I knew you as soon as I heard your voice."

"You disarranged our work pretty well for us, Mr. Dow—Nash. What were you after there, if it is a fair question?"

"I was after the confidence of some innocent youngsters, who could give me pointers on grindstones and their relation to the family income. As I know you both, and our friends of the hotel are not listening, I may say that I am so interested in this problem as to have made up my mind to go into grindstones myself."

These remarks led to an animated triangular conversation over the Grinstun man, in which the two pedestrians gave the detective all the information they possessed regarding that personage. They urged that an immediate effort should be made to hinder his acquiring the hand and property of Miss Du Plessis, and, thereafter, that united action should be taken to break up his injurious commerce. Mr. Nash prepared to accompany them on their walk to church in Flanders, and asked the lawyer if he had any objection to ride his horse part of the way, with a bundle behind him, if he, the detective, would carry his knapsack. Coristine consented, on condition that his new friend would also lend him his riding gaiters. Madame produced the wherewithal to spend a social half-hour before retiring, and, in answer to the detective, said: "Ze sack ees in ze commode in ze chombre of M'syae." Mr. Nash laughed, and, over his glass and clay pipe, confided to his