

"No, no," said Con Lehane, earnestly. "He's not so bad as that. He gave his word. He may curse us as a matter of duty; but his word of honor is pledged, and he won't break that, my life on it."

"Hum! I've met some slippery gentlemen of his cloth, said the General, bringing his revolver to half-cock, and burying it somewhere about his breast. "I presume, gentlemen, it is only necessary to say good-night," he added, with a significant glance towards the door. "I think you might keep young Rohan, on the look of him." This in an undertone to Captain Mike, as the others filtered out. "Now that we're alone," he proceeded rapidly, "let me say what brought me and what you've got to do. I am nominated to the command of the Southern District, and am on my way to Dublin to receive my instructions from the Directory, and to inquire for myself how matters stand. The expedition from the other side is ready. The first of our cruisers was to start four days after me. Barring accidents of weather, she is timed to be off Cooiloch Bay the eighth night from this."

"And I guess we're to be thar on time?" asked the Captain.

"You're to direct them which of the creeks it may be safest to run into. The password will be 'Celts with a vengeance.' You're to be responsible for the arrangements for transporting the arms and ammunition they'll bring secretly to Cork, after which you're to cut the telegraph wires, arrange for the landing of the men, and go for Bantry Barracks in concert with our friends in red. After that—the deluge!"

"General, I chirp in," said the Captain, caressing his moustache with much contentment. "The first point is not to get jailed meanwhile. This place ain't safe after to-night, even with Con Lehane on guard. I suspect this grizzly knows his way to a well with any mocassin'd son of a Soo. I have my eye on a spot where I can lie low this moment. And you?"

"I hope to cover half the ground to Cork before day-break," said the other, burying himself in the mountainous frieze coat, with which he equipped himself after landing. "Mr. Mahon is not a riding man, and will travel more slowly. I hope he will forgive me for suggesting that he should throw off that cloak and hat. Nothing could be more picturesque, but that's just it—it's so picturesque there is not a policeman with half an eye that won't fall admiring it."

"And there is a warrant out against you for high treason?" said Ken Rohan, tenderly. "I saw that they searched your house."

"Yes; but you see I am a born conspirator," replied the poet, who really believed it, and to whom any suggestion to the contrary was as bitter aloes. "I really am."

"So is a bed of posies homshells," whispered Captain Mike in an aside to the General. "But that's brother Mahon's way—he'd give up his life before he'd give up that ridiculous poet's uniform of his."

"If Mr. Mahon will stay here, he will be quite safe, and he will have my bed at the Mill with more welcome than a king," said Ken Rohan, timidly, as if there were really a crown of gold rounding Mr. Mahon's temples.

The poet put his hand upon his head again, affectionately, but shook his own head with a sad smile. "I must be going, like the General," he said.

"Then, I shall get out the pony and trap, and put you as far on your road by daybreak as the General himself," cried Ken Rohan with delight.

"That being settled, gentlemen—good-night. "We'll meet again, I dare say, if there's anything worth meeting for." And the General passed out at the iron-door among the graves, where Con Lehane was waiting to pilot him to his horse.

The next morning, while the woods and waters were shivering in cold silence under the bloodshot lights of a wintry dawn, Joshua Neville was taking his usual early walk in the high-terraced gardens behind Clanlaurance Castle, when he saw the American Captain walk out of one of the arbors to meet him.

He could not have been more amazed if the Prince of Darkness had started out of the ground in burning full-dress. "You here!" he exclaimed, tortured with all sorts of vague visions of celebrated outlaws from Jack Cade to Rob Roy McGregor, and unable to settle

in the least whether his own duty as an English liegeman required him to deal with the intruder, sword-in-hand, after the manner of "Alexander Iden, an Esquire of Kent," upon a like historic occasion—even if there was a sword immediately procurable.

"I guess so," said the American Captain. "You once mentioned that you never missed this sunrise walk of yours in the gardens. I've been three frozen hours waitin' for you in yonder bower o' roses by Bendemeer's stream. I went within a stave of getting my ankle cracked in one of them blamed steel-traps under the wall yonder, only, like everythin' belonging to old man Clanlaurance, the thing was slightly out of order."

"So like Lord Clanlaurance!" exclaimed the ironmaster, whom anything that jarred on his sense of the practical and orderly recalled for the moment from more abstract considerations. "But—er—ah—"

"What brings me here, you naturally ask?" said the Captain, charitably glossing over the fact that he had not asked. "Wal, not to burn fireworks over it, fact is there's Injuns around, an' I've made tracks to your stockade for shelter."

"To me! An Englishman!" cried Joshua Neville, who was making a rapid mental comparison between Captain Miko's brawny frame and his own shrunken Sunday-citizen figure, and darkly considering whether, nevertheless, Duty might not call upon him to disregard the odds.

"I guess I ain't the first hunted refugee from the nigger-drivers that found a friendly lighthouse in an Englishman's eye! 'Taint the English we're in grips with: it's with the swell mob that stole your flag an' run this island in the Pirate business. Anyways, Englishman or Choctaw, you seemed to strike me as a kind of whole man, an' I jest said I'd step 'round an' bore."

"It's High Treason, is it not?" asked Neville in a miserable state of indecision. The word "Treason," which falls on Irish ears like hushed music, laden, as were once the names of Balmerino and Kilmarnock, with associations which melt the gentle and fire the brave, conjured up in Joshua Neville's well-ordered English mind hateful notions of traitors taken in some treacherous deed of guilt against their Queen and country—of subterranean dungeons, and streaming blocks, and ghastly heads held up by the blood-clotted hair.

"High treason—that, I am given to understand, is the legend," said Captain Mike.

"And the penalty is—Death?"

"That always is about the penalty, unless you get the erect drop on the enemy first."

"It would be misprison of treason on my part to harbor you—involving imprisonment—involving perhaps penal servitude."

"Seems to me 'most everything in this island is Treason that is not Robbery," the Captain remarked with a sigh. He had been travelling all night, and looked sufficiently spent and haggard. "Wal, I daar say you're right—it's no affair of yours—it's our business to do our dying and penal-servituting for ourselves. Good-bye, boss—hope there ain't no offence given or taken—an' only hope in conclusion old man Clanlaurance ain't left no more o' them idiotic man-traps foolin' around that wall."

"Stay—you mistake me," said the ironmaster, who, having made up his mind on any subject, did not fear to shock a world in arms. "An Englishman finds some difficulty in placing himself at your point of view; but I think I understand. You are welcome to make my home your own, if you will give your word to use it only as a sanctuary, and in no other way than for the purpose of securing your escape from the country. On these terms you can command my home and me."

"Wal, boss, this is fair—it's generous—it bears out my ideas in boring in this gulch. But it won't do. I don't propose—by no manner of means—to use your house 'cept as reverently as if 'twor a church to cover my head for seven nights from the present; but as to what I may do outside it, after, or meanwhile—I can't allow my hands to be tied by your kindness, no more'n by Queen Victoria's handcuffs—no Sir! Thankee all the same, Honorable Joshua Neville, and, as a plain Amurrican citizen—put the hand there." Whereupon he crunched the ironmaster's hand in a grip like that of his own relentless steam hammers, and turned to go.

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