

ing finished dressing, and Margery was with me; so I sent her to bring me some account of the noise. She had scarce had time as I thought, to reach the kitchen when she was back again, bringing with her Jenny Hunter, the dairymaid—a woman that hath her full share of sense and faculty, as she hath more than once shown. She had been waiting my convenience in the kitchen for some time, as she told me. I promise you I quickly gave orders that will hinder the like from happening again. The convenience of a mistress is a thing that may well give way to the welfare of her household.

Poor Jenny, between rage and fright, had quite lost the power to make herself understood. She began a jumbled lament about the English soldiers, and Polly and Biddy; and Nelly and Rosy, that told me nothing at all. I made her sit down, even in my presence, assuring her that things could not be so bad but that something might be done to mend them, would she but collect herself and tell me clearly what was amiss.

"Auch, madam, the beautiful cattle!" said she; "sure we'll never see them again, and them beginning to be fat and nice again. Auch, and two of them in full milk, too, when milk's so scarce, goin' to be sold for beef at a penny a pound in Derry!"

And at that she broke out once more into sobbing and crying, so that I could make nothing of her at all.

"Jenny, Jenny," said I, "something has certainly muddled your wits this morning. What is it? Can ye tell me plainly what's wrong! I'm not going to sell my cows, either at a penny a pound or a shilling a pound, so make your mind easy!"

"Sell them, madam! No, indade," said she. "It's not yourself that'll have the chance either to sell them or to kape them. There's about a score of English soldiers gatherin' them into droves even now, to drive them into Derry for beef to the town."

"Nonsense!" said I, "that can't be true, for I've received no letter of requisition; and if I had, there are young beasts enough to send without killing our milk kine."

"'Tis even too true, madam," said Margery, who had been down again to gather news, seeing how unfit Jenny was to tell them—"tis even too true," quoth she. "There's a party of the English soldiers below in the yard that say they have General Kirke's orders to bring away all the live stock they can lay hands on, pretending that 'tis all the booty of the Irish army, and must therefore be the spoil of the conquerors."

At this I bethought me that Colonel Mitchelburne, our late military commander in Derry, would be aware if this was within the right of our defenders, as they scrupled not to call themselves. The Colonel lay at Clonally that night—'twas shortly before his departure for England—and I sent Margery to desire he would favour me with a minute's conversation as quick as might be; and that he did, being with me in a very few moments. Jenny by this time had got back her senses, and was able to tell him all that had occurred. He straightway assured me that Kirke had no right—save the right of the strong hand—to take from me a horn or a hoof that was my husband's, save upon clear necessity shown, and then to give me his bill of indebtedness for all that was taken without payment made.

Upon that assurance I was for hastening straight to the court-yard to expostulate with the officer commanding the foraging party; but Margery would have me delay till she brought me the hood and negligee that I wear when I go abroad in the mornings.

"For if you speak to these rude men," said she, "sure you must not either be flustered nor appear to be in haste, but show the same authority that you have among your own servants."

It chafed me to be hindered, even for a moment; but I have thought since that it was she was the wise one that time, not I. It is certain that a woman can do nothing to put herself at greater disadvantage in treating with men than to show any discomposure of manner, or any appearance of contending with them. If she be dignified and quiet, and show no doubt of their desire to serve her, they will scarce fail to show her that courtesy which is her due; such, at least, hath been my experience. But in my sudden heat of indignation, thinking that in my husband's necessary absence they were about to plunder him and me (for, having heard nothing of the exactions practiced on my neighbours, truly I thought this to be a case by itself), I felt in myself the spirit to have chidden the armed soldiers like naughty children; and had done it, too, but for Margery, and thereby, no doubt, lost much.

My composure, thus assumed with my hood and negligee, was nigh to failing me when I saw my milch cows from the farmyard, and the young cattle and stock from the pasture, driven pell-mell into the courtyard,

huddled and hustled together into droves, in preparation for being driven away altogether. My heart came into my very throat to think how it had fared with me and with all of us had I been timid and diffident of opposing mine own will to the will of others, as women are for the most part, and as I myself used to be. Then had I certainly stood still, with indignation burning in my heart and in mine eyes, no doubt, but with never a word to say to hinder them from stripping me of what I had to support my family and household withal, and that without reason given or payment so much as promised. But since my marriage my husband's frequent absence from home have forced me to acquire the habit of governing his people; this I felt my duty, and knew my right, to require a reason for these arbitrary measures. As to the military dress and arms, they awed me not at all. Six month's experience of the like in Derry had shown me for certain that they covered flesh and blood much similar to those of ordinary men.

I therefore called to me one of the soldiers that was nearest, bidding him desire his commanding officer to speak with me, and presently there came to me a man gray headed and weather-beaten, that had neither the bearing nor seeming that belonged to one that held his Majesty's commission; nor did he, being but a corporal.

Such were the persons empowered by Kirke to deprive us at their will of our substance. Sure there were men even in King James's army that had thought it their duty to show greater care of the well-being of conquered enemies, let alone their loyal fellow-subjects that they were sent to protect. But I am bound to say for this man that he treated me with all respect.

I asked him of his errand—whether it were for the service of the garrison at Derry he was collecting my cattle, to which he answered "Yes." Then I desired him that he would serve me with the letter, stating how many cattle I was asked to provide them withal, and upon whose authority the requisition was made.

At that he seemed something confused, but made answer presently that he brought no such paper as I spoke of.

"But," said he, "it is by the orders and authority of Major-General Kirke, military Governor of Londonderry, that I take possession of the cattle."

"Then," said I to him, "tell me how many cattle he hath bidden you to require of me, and I will order mine own people to choose them and deliver them to you, you giving me, of course, your receipt for the same."

The man seemed yet more taken aback than at the first.

"Madam," said he, after muttering something to himself that was not meant for mine ears, "I am not required by my orders to give receipts for the cattle I collect, nor is there a number appointed me to ask. It hath come to the ears of the General," said he, gathering assurance, "that all the cattle in these parts is nothing but the stock that was abandoned by the Irish army in its retreat, which the country people have taken for their own use, a thing that by no means can be permitted, for by all the rules of war the booty of a routed army belongs to the conquerors. The General hath therefore sent us out to bring it in."

The man tried to speak roundly, but was let by his conscience; for well he knew the falsehood of that which, as he said, had been told to the General. I answered him very quietly.

"Then the General is misinformed," said I. "For there is not an animal you see here but is the undoubted property of Captain Hamilton, my husband. They were all bestowed in safe keeping while the Jacobite army was here, as can be proved by many witnesses. Any one that knows Mr. Hamilton—and there are enough of his acquaintances in Derry," said I, "to speak to his reputation—will tell General Kirke whether we are like to refuse anything we have that is required for the public service, so it be duly asked of us and the need for it shown. But this is illegal exaction, and I leave it to yourself to say if I should submit to it."

I finished in my very gentlest voice, which was none so easy for me to compass, for ever and anon there came a sound into it, in my own despite, that was pure defiance, and even to mine own ear said plainly, "Do it if you dare!" But I fought against this with all my might, for it is not the way to succeed with men that have weapons in their hands, to dare them to the thing they have a mind to do.

The corporal looked at me, and then at the cattle, and last of all he looked at his boots. He seemed to be suffering an extremity of discomfort. At the last he said:

"This is all very well for you, madam, but I hardly know how it will sound in the General's ears, that a party sent by him to bring in cattle have left the best

lot—Gad! by very much the best lot—they have come across, at the bidding of a lady."

"You had better consider likewise," said I very calmly, but in spite of myself my voice sounded something stern, "How it will sound in King William's ears that his liege subjects, so lately dwelling in the very shadow of death for his service, have been violently deprived of their substance without so much as a plea of necessity made."

"Yes, yes, madam," said the man, looking up upon a sudden; "this is all very well—very well indeed. Ye say the cattle are all yours, and no doubt so you think. But how," says he, "am I to know that it's true?"

This was putting me into a corner, as one might say, for, indeed I knew not how to prove that these identical animals were our own, though of the number returned by each person that had charge of a parcel of them I could easily have rendered an exact account; and sure the tally he might have made out for himself well enough. But here spoke up Jenny Hunter, who, seeing me so composed, had grown composed herself.

"Sure," said she to him, "an' you'll have the kindness to bid them red-coats leave alone the milch cows, I'll soon let you see if they're our own, anyway."

Then she began to call to them in the outlandish jargon that she doth use to bring them to her out of the field, the creatures raising and turning their heads forthwith, as those that knew the call. Then, they being no longer restrained and threatened of the soldiers, she called to each by its name, and as she called they came to her one by one, save that the last of them grew impatient, and ran to her all at once, not waiting to be called.

"Will ye open the door of the byre, Teddy?" she said then to a man of ours that was near her.

And he set it open. Then she began another chant as barbarous as the first; but at the sound of it, the animals, understanding it, filed orderly and quiet into the byre, each taking her own place and standing there ready to be fastened up for the milking.

"Will that content ye, ye reaving ruffians?" said she, which insult might easily have undone the good effect of my gentleness, had they perfectly understood it.

Then Teddy stepped up, and said that he thought that some of the young cattle he had tended might follow his voice, if I pleased he should try. But the corporal declared himself satisfied. Therefore, as I judged it well to to have his good word with General Kirke, I sent him into the kitchen to break his fast; for the men I gave orders that something should be brought to them where they were. Teddy spoke up before them all, and told me that five or six young animals had been sent away under the charge of two troopers before I came out into the yard. I cared not to press for the restitution of these, lest in trying for over-much I should lose all. I made Master Corporal Simkins [for that was the name of him] give me his receipt for them, however, Cargill, my servant, writing both the paper and the corporal's name, as he could not do so much for himself; and he making his mark, which was duly attested by two witnesses. This paper, though I still possess it, hath never brought me in a penny as yet; nor do I care to press that either, being well content to postpone mine own just claims to those of others, my neighbours, who have been bereft of all their substance, or near it.

I shall scarce get me to the siege, I fear, if I spend so much time in telling beforehand what had come after it, which is, as they say in this part of the country, but an Irish way of making a beginning. But I cannot forbear to relate how I found the Colonel and Margery ensconced beneath the little window that gives light to the passage into the kitchen, whence they had listened to every word that had been said; and had taken a peep from time to time, as they judged it safe, at what was passing in the yard. The Colonel had his pistols loaded and laid ready to his hand, and had not hesitated to interpose therewith on my behalf, had he thought the men likely to molest me. It was fortunate on all accounts that this was unnecessary.

If praise could have made me forget my inward tremors of rage and defiance, and the pain I had to keep them under in my speech, I had it in plenty; they went about to puff me up like a wind-bag with their flattery, Colonel Mitchelburne and Margery. 'Twas something, no doubt, to be assured that whatever my feelings were my conduct was what it should be—the effect also was what I desired—yet to Jenny Hunter was due no small part of the credit of this, for, certes, without her I had made but a poor demonstration of my ownership of the cattle, and Margery's good thought of the hood and negligee should not be forgotten. I told her so, and rallied her, saying that