

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Vinci
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Freud Zola Lawrence Dickens Harte
Kant Jowett Stevenson Burton Hesse
Andersen London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
Doré Dante Pushkin Alcott
Swift Chekhov Newton



tredition was established in 2006 by Sandra Latusseck and Soenke Schulz. Based in Hamburg, Germany, tredition offers publishing solutions to authors and publishing houses, combined with worldwide distribution of printed and digital book content. tredition is uniquely positioned to enable authors and publishing houses to create books on their own terms and without conventional manufacturing risks.

For more information please visit: www.tredition.com

TREDITION CLASSICS

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series. The creators of this series are united by passion for literature and driven by the intention of making all public domain books available in printed format again - worldwide. Most TREDITION CLASSICS titles have been out of print and off the bookstore shelves for decades. At tredition we believe that a great book never goes out of style and that its value is eternal. Several mostly non-profit literature projects provide content to tredition. To support their good work, tredition donates a portion of the proceeds from each sold copy. As a reader of a TREDITION CLASSICS book, you support our mission to save many of the amazing works of world literature from oblivion. See all available books at www.tredition.com.



The content for this book has been graciously provided by Project Gutenberg. Project Gutenberg is a non-profit organization founded by Michael Hart in 1971 at the University of Illinois. The mission of Project Gutenberg is simple: To encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks. Project Gutenberg is the first and largest collection of public domain eBooks.

Waysiders

Seumas O'Kelly

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Seumas O'Kelly

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7340-9

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

Copyright:

The content of this book is sourced from the public domain.

The intention of the TREDITION CLASSICS series is to make world literature in the public domain available in printed format. Literary enthusiasts and organizations, such as Project Gutenberg, worldwide have scanned and digitally edited the original texts. tredition has subsequently formatted and redesigned the content into a modern reading layout. Therefore, we cannot guarantee the exact reproduction of the original format of a particular historic edition. Please also note that no modifications have been made to the spelling, therefore it may differ from the orthography used today.

CONTENTS

The Can with the Diamond Notch

Both Sides of the Pond

The White Goat

The Sick Call

The Shoemaker

The Rector

The Home-coming

A Wayside Burial

The Gray Lake

The Building

THE CAN WITH THE DIAMOND NOTCH

I

[Illustration: *Festus Clasby*]

The name stood out in chaste white letters from the black background of the signboard. Indeed the name might be said to spring from the landscape, for this shop jumped from its rural setting with an air of aggression. It was a commercial oasis on a desert of grass. It proclaimed the clash of two civilisations. There were the hills, pitched round it like the galleries of some vast amphitheatre, rising tier upon tier to the blue of the sky. There was the yellow road, fantastic in its frolic down to the valley. And at one of its wayward curves was the shop, the shop of Festus Clasby, a foreign growth upon the landscape, its one long window crowded with sombre merchandise, its air that of established, cob-web respectability.

Inside the shop was Festus Clasby himself, like some great masterpiece in its ancient frame. He was the product of the two civilisations, a charioteer who drove the two fiery steeds of *Agricolo* and *Trade* with a hand of authority. He was a man of lands and of shops. His dark face, framed in darker hair and beard, was massive and square. Behind the luxurious growth of hair the rich blood glowed on the clear skin. His chest had breadth, his limbs were great, showing girth at the hips and power at the calves. His eyes were large and dark, smouldering in soft velvety tones. The nose was long, the nostrils expressive of a certain animalism, the mouth looked eloquent. His voice was low, of an agreeable even quality, floating over the boxes and barrels of his shop like a chant. His words never jarred, his views were vaguely comforting, based on accepted conventions, expressed in round, soft, lulling platitudes. His manner was serious, his movements deliberate, the great bulk of the shoulders looming up in unconscious but dramatic poses in the curiously uneven lighting of the shop. His hands gave the impression of slowness and a moderate skill; they could make up a parcel on the counter without leaving ugly laps; they could perform a minor surgical operation on a beast in the fields without degenerating to butchery; and they would always be doing something, even

if it were only rolling up a ball of twine. His clothes exuded a faint suggestion of cinnamon, nutmeg and caraway seeds.

Festus Clasby would have looked the part in any notorious position in life; his shoulders would have carried with dignity the golden chain of office of the mayoralty of a considerable city; he would have looked a perfect chairman of a jury at a Coroner's inquest; as the Head of a pious Guild in a church he might almost be confused with the figures of the stained glass windows; marching at the head of a brass band he would symbolise the conquering hero; as an undertaker he would have reconciled one to death. There was no technical trust which men would not have reposed in him, so perfectly was he wrought as a human casket. As it was, Festus Clasby filled the most fatal of all occupations to dignity without losing his tremendous illusion of respectability. The hands which cut the bacon and the tobacco, turned the taps over pint measures, scooped bran and flour into scales, took herrings out of their barrels, rolled up sugarsticks in shreds of paper for children, were hands whose movements the eyes of no saucy customer dared follow with a gleam of suspicion. Not once in a lifetime was that casket tarnished; the nearest he ever went to it was when he bought up—very cheaply, as was his custom—a broken man's insurance policy a day after the law made such a practice illegal. There was no haggling at Festus Clasby's counter. There was only conversation, agreeable conversation about things which Festus Clasby did not sell, such as the weather, the diseases of animals, the results of races, and the scandals of the Royal Families of Europe. These conversations were not hurried or yet protracted. They came to a happy ending at much the same moment as Festus Clasby made the knot on the twine of your parcel. But to stand in the devotional lights in front of his counter, wedged in between divisions and subdivisions of his boxes and barrels, and to scent the good scents which exhaled from his shelves, and to get served by Festus Clasby in person, was to feel that you had been indeed served.

The small farmers and herds and the hardy little dark mountainy men had this reverential feeling about the good man and his shop. They approached the establishment as holy pilgrims might approach a shrine. They stood at his counter with the air of devotees. Festus Clasby waited on them with patience and benignity. He

might be some warm-blooded god handing gifts out over the counter. When he brought forth his great account book and entered up their purchases with a carpenter's pencil—having first moistened the tip of it with his flexible lips—they had strongly, deep down in their souls, the conviction that they were then and for all time debtors to Festus Clasby. Which, indeed and in truth, they were. From year's end to year's end their accounts remained in that book; in the course of their lives various figures rose and faded after their names, recording the ups and downs of their financial histories. It was only when Festus Clasby had supplied the materials for their wakes that the great pencil, with one mighty stroke of terrible finality, ran like a sword through their names, wiping their very memories from the hillsides. All purchases were entered up in Festus Clasby's mighty record without vulgar discussions as to price. The business of the establishment was conducted on the basis of a belief in the man who sold and acquiescence in that belief on the part of the man who purchased. The customers of Festus Clasby would as soon have thought of questioning his prices as they would of questioning the right of the earth to revolve round the sun. Festus Clasby was the planet around which this constellation of small farmers, herds, and hardy little dark mountainy men revolved; from his shop they drew the light and heat and food which kept them going. Their very emotions were registered at his counter. To the man with a religious turn he was able, at a price, to hand down from his shelves the *Key of Heaven*; the other side of the box he comforted the man who came panting to his taps to drown the memory of some chronic impertinence. He gave a very long credit, and a very long credit, in his philosophy, justified a very, very long profit. As to security, if Festus Clasby's customers had not a great deal of money they had grass which grew every year, and the beasts which Festus Clasby fattened and sold at the fairs had sometimes to eat his debtors out of his book. If his bullocks were not able to do even this, then Festus Clasby talked to the small farmer about a mortgage on the land, so that now and again small farmers became herds for Festus Clasby. In this way was he able to maintain his position with his back to the hills and his toes in the valley, striding his territory like a Colossus. When you saw his name on the signboard standing stark from the landscape, and when you saw Festus Clasby behind

his counter, you knew instinctively that both had always stood for at least twenty shillings in the pound.

II

Now, it came to pass that on a certain day Festus Clasby was passing through the outskirts of the nearest country town on his homeward journey, his cart laden with provisions. At the same moment the spare figure of a tinker whose name was Mac-an-Ward, the Son of the Bard, veered around the corner of a street with a new tin can under his arm. It was the Can with the Diamond Notch.

Mac-an-Ward approached Festus Clasby, who pulled up his cart.

"Well, my good man?" queried Festus Clasby, a phrase usually addressed across his counter, his hands outspread, to longstanding customers.

"The last of a rare lot," said Mac-an-Ward, deftly poising the tin can on the top of his fingers, so that it stood level with Festus Clasby's great face. Festus Clasby took this as a business proposition, and the soul of the trader revolved within him. Why not buy the tin can from this tinker and sell it at a profit across his counter, even as he would sell the flitches of bacon that were wrapped in sacking upon his cart? He was in mellow mood, and laid down the reins in the cart beside him.

"And so she is the last?" he said, eyeing the tin can.

"She is the Can with the Diamond Notch."

"Odds and ends go cheap," said Festus Clasby.

"She is the last, but the flower of the flock."

"Remnants must go as bargains or else remain as remnants."

"My wallet!" protested Mac-an-Ward, "you wound me. Don't speak as if I picked it off a scrap heap."

"I will not, but I will say that, being a tail end and an odd one, it must go at a sacrifice."

The Son of the Bard tapped the side of the can gently with his knuckles.

"Listen to him, the hard man from the country! He has no regard for my feelings. I had the soldering iron in my hand in face of it before the larks stirred this morning. I had my back to the East, but through the bottom of that can there I saw the sun rise in its glory. The brightness of it is as the harvest moon."

"I don't want it for its brightness."

"Dear heart, listen to the man who would not have brightness. He would pluck the light from the moon, quench the heat in the heart of the sun. He would draw a screen across the aurora borealis and paint out the rainbow with lamp black. He might do such things, but he cannot deny the brightness of this can. Look upon it! When the world is coming to an end it will shine up at the sky and it will say: 'Ah, where are all the great stars now that made a boast of their brightness?' And there will be no star left to answer. They will all be dead things in the heaven, buried in the forgotten graves of the skies."

"Don't mind the skies. Let me see if there may not be a leakage in it." Festus Clasby held up the can between his handsome face and the bright sky.

"Leakages!" exclaimed Mac-an-Ward. "A leakage in a can that I soldered as if with my own heart's blood. Holy Kilcock, what a mind has this man from the country! He sees no value in its brightness; now he will tell me that there is no virtue in its music."

"I like music," said Festus Clasby. "No fiddler has ever stood at my door but had the good word to say of me. Not one of them could ever say that he went thirsty from my counter."

Said the Son of the Bard: "Fiddlers, what are fiddlers? What sound have they like the music of the sweet milk going into that can from the yellow teats of the red cow? Morning and evening there will be a hymn played upon it in the haggard. Was not the finest song ever made called *Cailin deas crúidhte na mbo*? Music! Do you think that the water in the holy well will not improve in its sparkle to have such a can as this dipped into it? It will be welcome everywhere for its clearness and its cleanness. Heavenly Father, look at

the manner in which I rounded the edge of that can with the clip-pers! Cut clean and clever, soldered at the dawn of day, the dew falling upon the hands that moulded it, the parings scattered about my feet like jewels. And now you would bargain over it. I will not sell it to you at all. I will put it in a holy shrine."

Festus Clasby turned the can over in his hands, a little bewildered. "It looks an ordinary can enough," he said.

"It is the Can with the Diamond Notch," declared Mac-an-Ward.

"Would it be worth a shilling now?"

"He puts a price upon it! It is blasphemy. The man has no religion; he will lose his soul. The devils will have him by the heels. They will tear his red soul through the roof. Give me the can; don't hold it in those hands any longer. They are coarse; the hair is standing about the purple knuckles like stubbles in an ill-cut meadow. That can was made for the hands of a delicate woman or for the angels that carry water to the Court of Heaven. I saw it in a vision the night before I made it; it was on the head of a maiden with golden hair. Her feet were bare and like shells. She walked across a field where daisies rose out of young grass; she had the can resting on her head like one coming from the milking. So I rose up then and said, 'Now, I will make a can fit for this maiden's head.' And I made it out of the rising sun and the falling dew. And now you ask me if it is worth a shilling."

"For all your talk, it is only made of tin, and not such good tin."

"Not good tin! I held it in my hand in the piece before ever the clippers was laid upon it. I bent it and it curved, supple as a young snake. I shook it, and the ripples ran down the length of it like silver waves in a little lake. The strength of the ages was in its voice. It has gathered its power in the womb of the earth. It was smelted from the precious metal taken from the mines of the Peninsula of Malacca, and it will have its gleam when the sparkle of the diamond is spent."

"I'll give you a shilling for it, and hold your tongue."

"No! I will not have it on my conscience. God is my judge, I will break it up first. I will cut it into pieces. From one of them will yet

be made a breastplate, and in time to come it will be nailed to your own coffin, with your name and your age and the date of your death painted upon it. And when the paint is faded upon it it will shine over the dust of the bone of your breast. It will be dug up and preserved when all graveyards are abolished. They will say, 'We will keep this breastplate, for who knows but that it bore the name of the man who refused to buy the Can with the Diamond Notch.'

"How much will you take for it?"

"Now you are respectful. Let me put a price upon it, for it was I who fashioned it into this shape. It will hold three gallons and a half from now until the time that swallows wear shoes. But for all that I will part with it, because I am poor and hungry and have a delicate wife. It breaks my heart to say it, but pay into my hands two shillings and it is yours. Pay quickly or I may repent. It galls me to part with it; in your charity pay quickly and begone."

"I will not. I will give you one-and-six."

"Assassin! You stab me. What a mind you have! Look at the greed of your eyes; they would devour the grass of the fields from this place up to the Devil's Bit. You would lock up the air and sell it in gasping breaths. You are disgusting. But give me the one-and-six and to Connacht with you! I am damning my soul standing beside you and your cart, smelling its contents. How can a man talk with the smell of fat bacon going between him and the wind? One-and-six and the dew that fell at the making hardly dry upon my hands yet. Farewell, a long farewell, my Shining One; we may never meet again."

The shawl of Mac-an-Ward's wife had been blowing around the near-by corner while this discussion had been in progress. It flapped against the wall in the wind like a loose sail in the rigging. The head of the woman herself came gradually into view, one eye spying around the masonry, half-closing as it measured the comfortable proportions of Festus Clasby seated upon his cart. As the one-and-six was counted out penny by penny into the palm of the brown hand of the Son of the Bard, the figure of his wife floated out on the open road, tossing and tacking and undecided in its direction to the eye of those who understood not the language of gestures

and motions. By a series of giddy evolutions she arrived at the cart as the last of the coppers was counted out.

"I have parted with my inheritance," said Mac-an-Ward. "I have sold my soul and the angels have folded their wings, weeping."

"In other words, I have bought a tin can," said Festus Clasby, and his frame and the entire cart shook with his chuckling.

The tinker's wife chuckled with him in harmony. Then she reached out her hand with a gesture that claimed a sympathetic examination of the purchase. Festus Clasby hesitated, looking into the eyes of the woman. Was she to be trusted? Her eyes were clear, grey, and open, almost babyish in their rounded innocence. Festus Clasby handed her the tin can, and she examined it slowly.

"Who sold you the Can with the Diamond Notch?" she asked.

"The man standing by your side."

"He has wronged you. The can is not his."

"He says he made it."

"Liar! He never curved it in the piece."

"I don't much care whether he did or not. It is mine now, anyhow."

"It is my brother's can. No other hand made it. Look! Do you see this notch on the piece of sheet iron where the handle is fastened to the sides?"

"I do."

"Is it not shaped like a diamond?"

"It is."

"By that mark I identify it. My brother cuts that diamond-shaped notch in all the work he puts out from his hands. It is his private mark. The shopkeepers have knowledge of it. There is a value on the cans with that notch shaped like a diamond. This man here makes cans when he is not drunk, but the notch to them is square. The shopkeepers have knowledge of them, too, for they do not last. The handles fall out of them. He has never given his time to the art, and so does not know how to rivet them."

"She vilifies me," said Mac-an-Ward, *sotto voce*.

"Then I am glad he has not sold me one of his own," said Festus Clasby. "I have a fancy for the lasting article."

"You may be able to buy it yet," said the woman. "My brother is lying sick of the fever, and I have his right to sell the Cans with the Diamond Notch on the handles where they are riveted."

"But I have bought it already."

"This man," said the damsel, in a tone which discounted the husband, "had no right to sell it. If it is not his property, but the property of my brother, won't you say that he nor no other man has a right to sell it?"

Festus Clasby felt puzzled. He was unaccustomed to dealing with people who raised questions of title. His black brows knit.

"How can a man who doesn't own a thing sell a thing?" she persisted. "Is it a habit of yours to sell that which you do not own?"

"It is not," Festus Clasby said, feeling that an assault had been wantonly made on his integrity as a trader. "No one could ever say that of me. Honest value was ever my motto."

"And the motto of my brother who is sick with the fever. I will go to him and say, 'I met the most respectable-looking man in all Europe, who put a value on your can because of the diamond notch.' I will pay into his hands the one-and-six which is its price."

Festus Clasby had, when taken out of his own peculiar province, a heavy mind, and the type of mind that will range along side-issues and get lost in them if they are raised often enough and long enough. The diamond notch on the handle, the brother who was sick of the fever, the alleged non-title of Mac-an-Ward, the interposition of the woman, the cans with the handles which fall out, and the cans with the handles which do not fall out, the equity of selling that which does not belong to you—all these things chased each other across Festus Clasby's mind. The Son of the Bard stood silent by the cart, looking away down the road with a pensive look on his long, narrow face.

"Pay me the one-and-six to put into the hands of my brother," the woman said.

Festus Clasby's mind was brought back at once to his pocket. "No," he said, "but this man can give you my money to pay into the hand of your brother."

"This man," she said airily, "has no interest for me. Whatever took place between the two of you in regard to my brother's can I will have nothing to say to."

"Then if you won't," said Festus Clasby, "I will have nothing to do with you. If he had no right to the can you can put the police on to him; that's what police are for."

"And upon you," the woman added. "The police are also for that."

"Upon me?" Festus Clasby exclaimed, his chest swelling. "My name has never crossed the mind of a policeman, except, maybe, for what he might owe me at the end of the month for pigs' heads. I never stood in the shadow of the law. And to this man standing by your side I have nothing to say."

"You have. You bought from him that which did not belong to him. You received, and the receiver is as bad as the rogue. So the law has it. The shadow of the law is great."

Festus Clasby came down from his cart, his face troubled. "I am not used to this," he said.

"You are a handsome man, a man thought well of. You have great provisions upon your cart. This man has nothing but the unwashed shirt which hangs on his slack back. It will not become you to march handcuffed with his like, going between two policemen to the bridewell."

"What are you saying of me, woman?"

"It will be no token of business to see your cart and the provisions it contains driven into the yard of the barracks. All the people of this town will see it, for they have many eyes. The people of trade will be coming to their doors, speaking of it. 'A man's property was molested,' they will say. 'What property?' will be asked. 'The Can with the Diamond Notch,' they will answer; 'the man of substance conspired with the thief to make away with it.' These are the words that will be spoken in the streets."

Festus Clasby set great store on his name, the name he had got painted for the eye of the country over his door.

"I will be known to the police as one extensive in my dealings," he said. "They will not couple me with this man who is known as one living outside of the law."

"It is not for the Peelers to put the honest man on one side and the thief on the other. That will be for the court. You will stand with him upon my charge. The Peelers will say to you, 'We know you to be a man of great worth, and the law will uphold you.' But the law is slow, and a man's good name goes fast."

Festus Clasby fingered his money in his pocket, and the touch of it made him struggle. "The can may be this man's for all I know. You have no brother, and I believe you to be a fraud."

"That, too, will be for the law to decide. If I have a brother, the law will produce him when his fever is ended. If I have no brother the law will so declare it. If my brother makes a Can with the Diamond Notch, the law will hear of its value. If my brother does not make a Can with the Diamond Notch you will know me as one deficient in truth. There is no point under the stars that the law cannot be got to declare upon. But as is right, the law is slow, and will wait for a man to come out of his fever. Before it can decide, another man's good name, like a little cloud riding across the sky, is gone from the memory of the people and will not come riding back upon the crest of any wind."

"It will be a great price to be paying for a tin can," said Festus Clasby. He was turning around with his fingers the coins in his pocket.

The woman put the can on her arm, then covered it up with her shawl, like a hen taking a chick under the protection of her wing.

"I have given you many words," she said, "because you are a man sizeable and good to the eye of a foolish woman. If I had not a sick brother I might be induced to let slip his right in the Can with the Diamond Notch for the pleasure I have found in the look of your face. When I saw you on the cart I said, 'There is the build of a man which is to my fancy.' When I heard your voice I said, 'That is good music to the ear of a woman.' When I saw your eye I said, 'There is

danger to the heart of a woman.' When I saw your beard I said, 'There is a great growth from the strength of a man.' When you spoke to me and gave me your laugh I said, 'Ah, what a place that would be for a woman to be seated, driving the roads of the country on a cart laden with provisions beside one so much to the female liking.' But my sick brother waits, and now I go to do that which may make away with the goodness of your name. I must seek those who will throw the shadow of the law over many."

She moved away, sighing a quick sigh, as one might who was setting out on a disagreeable mission. Festus Clasby called to her and she came back, her eyes pained as they sought his face. Festus Clasby paid the money, a bright shilling and two threepenny bits, into her hand, wondering vaguely, but virtuously, as he did so, what hardy little dark mountainy man he would later charge up the can to at the double price.

"Now," said the wife of Mac-an-Ward, putting the money away, "you have paid me for my brother's can and you would be within your right in getting back your one-and-six from this bad man." She hitched her shawl contemptuously in the direction of Mac-an-Ward.

Festus Clasby looked at the Son of the Bard with his velvety soft eyes. "Come, sir," said he, his tone a little nervous. "My money!"

Mac-an-Ward hitched his trousers at the hips like a sailor, spat through his teeth, end eyed Festus Clasby through a slit in his half-closed eyes. There was a little patter of the feet on the road on the part of Mac-an-Ward, and Festus Clasby knew enough of the world and its ways to gather that these were scientific movements invented to throw a man in a struggle. He did not like the look of the Son of the Bard.

"I will go home and leave him to God," he said. "Hand me the can and I will be shortening my road."

At this moment three small boys, ragged, eager, their faces hard and weather-beaten, bounded up to the cart. They were breathless as they stood about the woman.

"Mother!" they cried in chorus. "The man in the big shop! He is looking for a can."

"What can?" cried the woman.

The three young voices rose like a great cry: "The Can with the Diamond Notch."

The woman caught her face in her hands as if some terrible thing had been said. She stared at the youngsters intently.

"He wants one more to make up an order," they chanted. "He says he will pay—"

The woman shrank from them with a cry. "How much?" she asked.

"Half-a-crown!"

The wife of Mac-an-Ward threw out her arms in a wild gesture of despair. "My God!" she cried. "I sold it. I wronged my sick brother."

"Where did you sell it, mother?"

"Here, to this handsome dark man."

"How much did he pay?"

"Eighteen-pence."

The three youngsters raised their hard faces to the sky and raised a long howl, like beagles who had lost their quarry.

Suddenly the woman's face brightened. She looked eagerly at Festus Clasby, then laid the hand of friendship, of appeal, on his arm.

"I have it!" she cried, joyfully.

"Have what?" asked Festus Clasby.

"A way out of the trouble," she said. "A means of saving my brother from wrong. A way of bringing him his own for the Can with the Diamond Notch."

"What way might that be?" asked Festus Clasby, his manner growing sceptical.

"I will go to the shopman with it and get the half-crown. Having got the half-crown I will hurry back here—or you can come with me—and I will pay you back your one-and-six. In that way I will make another shilling and do you no wrong. Is that agreed?"

"It is not agreed," said Festus Clasby. "Give me out the tin can. I am done with you now."

"It's robbery!" cried the woman, her eyes full of a blazing sudden anger.

"What is robbery?" asked Festus Clasby.

"Doing me out of a shilling. Wronging my sick brother out of his earnings. A man worth hundreds, maybe thousands, to stand between a poor woman and a shilling. I am deceived in you."

"Out with the can," said Festus Clasby.

"Let the woman earn her shilling," said Mac-an-Ward. His voice came from behind Festus Clasby.

"Our mother must get her shilling," cried the three youngsters.

Festus Clasby turned about to Mac-an-Ward, and as he did so he noticed that two men had come and set their backs against a wall hard by; they leaned limply, casually, against it, but they were, he noticed, of the same tribe as the Mac-an-Wards.

"It was always lucky, the Can with the Diamond Notch," said the woman. "This offer of the man in the big shop is a sign of it. I will not allow you to break my brother's luck and he lying in his fever."

"By heaven!" cried Festus Clasby. "I will have you all arrested. I will have the law of you now."

He wheeled about the horse and cart, setting his face for the police barrack, which could be seen shining in the distance in the plumage of a magpie. The two men who stood by came over, and from the other side another man and three old women. With Mac-an-Ward, Mrs. Mac-an-Ward, and the three young Mac-an-Wards, they grouped themselves around Festus Clasby, and he was vaguely conscious that they were grouped with some military art. A low murmur of a dispute arose among them, rising steadily. He could only hear snatches of their words: 'Give it back to him,' 'He won't get it,' 'How can he be travelling without the Can with the Diamond Notch?' 'Is it the Can with the Diamond Notch?' 'No,' 'Maybe it is, maybe it is not,' 'Who knows that?' 'I say yes,' 'Hold your tongue,' 'Be off, you slut,' 'Rattle away.'