

SHEMUS DHU, THE BLACK PEDLAR OF GALWAY.

A TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES.

CHAPTER XX.

When our friends, conducted by the priest, returned to the stairs which led to the chamber of the dead woman, they found that all was quiet as the grave—there was not even the most distant hum of noise from the street.

"Father, the silence is favourable to our departure," said Murrough, to the priest. "Yet I would wish to see her. It will be for the last time, before she is given to the worms!"

"You may go, my son," said the priest. "I fear not any unchristian weakness from you. The young men may also go with you. It will teach them a lesson on the vanity of this world."

When they entered again the chamber of the dead, they saw that she had been "laid out." Two candles were placed on forms at either side of the bed; a wooden rosary and crucifix were on her breast. Her limbs were straightened by force; but, despite all the efforts of the old woman, who watched her, to smoothen the lineaments of her face, the same convulsed expression with which she had departed life—horrible and ghastly—sat upon them. Murrough looked at her only for a few moments. He knelt for a quarter of an hour in prayer, with his head bowed upon the pallet, undisturbed by any; then he arose quickly, and said to Fergus, who stood in silent mourning near him:

"Who would believe that she was once the most beautiful of women, and that she was loved by many? Come on, young man!"

"Whither do you lead me now?" asked Fergus, starting. "I had expected to see Shemus Dhu on this night."

The priest also started, but it was at the last words of Fergus. He looked quickly at Fergus to the guide, and he perceived that the latter drew the cap of frieze, which he never took off from the first moment of his entrance—not even in the chapel—more closely over his brows and ears. The words "Shemus Dhu" aroused O'Reilly, who was half asleep upon a chair.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, staggering forward, "we have had enough of adventures for one night. It is a wilful tempting the blind goddess to ask her to give us more sport to-night. I think, Mr. Fergus, I did not promise to do all for you in a few hours. Let us rest here, or somewhere in the house. We cannot work more without sleep. On to-morrow I will wed D'Arcy for you, and bring you to Shemus Dhu, poor fellow! and then, if my father does not pardon me, I will snap my fingers at the whole town, and cry out high for Busear, my gun, the mountain, and your pretty sister, Mr. Fergus."

"He speaks without sense," said the guide. "Your blessing, father, and we go."

"Had you not better remain here? I have accommodation for you all," replied the priest. "It is safer after the threats you have heard in the chapel."

"No," said the guide; "it would bring you danger, father. Besides, it would show too much fear, of what I believe to be a vain threat; and our mistress of the 'Salmon' expects us."

"Oh, do you hang on with us yet, Mr. Guide?" said Frank. "You should remain with the good father. To tell you my mind, plainly, though I think you are an honest man, I am sure you are an unlucky companion. So you are going without me! Well, I must follow. Good night, father."

"Bless you—God bless you—my children!" said the priest, as he locked the street gate after them. It was the third hour after midnight when they entered upon the street again. The moon had entirely gone down; a pitchy darkness shrouded every object.

"By J—!" said O'Reilly, aloud, "in this darkness we cannot distinguish friend from foe! Halloo! Fergus, where do you go?"

"You did not know the street when you entered it at first?" said a voice in his ear, which made him start. It was the guide's, and still it had tones in it different from his common mode of speech—different, too, from those he used on the bridge, or in the chamber of the dead, and yet which Frank was sure he had heard very often. "There is no use now to keep it secret. You are in Middle-street. You must be cautious, at least for your friend's sake, and speak only in whispers. Take Fergus' arm, and follow."

"That fellow must be the devil, or one of his imps," thought O'Reilly; everything is a mystery and changeable about him. First he flew, not as a human being, along the road from Moycullen. He disappeared at the inn, and came in as suddenly without any person's knowledge. He prays now as piously as any saint in the calendar, and then he strikes his companion, and gags him, and brings him blinded, high and low, up and down, and all for the purpose of presenting him to his dying sister or cousin. He cries at one time like a child, and again commands like a general; and all the while does not show his face, though he shows many changes of voice; and worse than everything, he brings two stout young fellows wherever he pleases who know nothing about him, and yet who are afraid to disobey him. Well, I will be quiet for this night; to-morrow I will choose my company. A pretty change for Frank O'Reilly, the toast of all the gay fellows of the town, that he is afraid to whistle a tune in the very street where he often trotted a party song in the teeth of the red-coats—ays, and of the very mayor and aldermen to boot! Now, if I could recollect a slave, I would cut with it, to spite this fellow. I can't though; his company is heavy on me. I wish I was safely free from him!"

These thoughts brought Frank and his companions, without any interruption to the end of the street. I have remarked that a street ran at right angles to Middle-street. The lower or left arm of it led into Flood-street, the direct and nearest way to the Spanish Parade. The upper part led to the "Lower Four Corners," where it divided High-street from Quay-street, from which circumstance it took its name of Cross-street. This way to the Spanish Parade, through Quay-street, was the longer as well as the more dangerous way. Besides being more central, and consequently more frequented than the back street, our friends, if they choose it as their way, should be obliged to pass the quay gate, near which sentinels were always stationed, or else pass through Courthouse-lane, in which a guard was placed every night. It did not, for a moment, occur to O'Reilly, who knew the localities and circumstances of the place, that the guide would have preferred the longer way, with so many evident risks, and without any apparent advantage. However, when they stopped at the guide's command, and he had examined the street up and down, he told them "for reasons which he could not explain, that they must take the quay road to the 'Salmon.'"

"You must have my word to that bargain, friend," said O'Reilly, in a voice louder than was prudent. "I have allowed you long enough to lead us. I will guide my young friend here by a nearer and safer way to his lodgings. I think there is danger, if not deceit, in your farther guidance of us."

"Madman! would you bring on, with your noise, the danger which you fear so much? Don't you recollect we were surprised in the lower streets to-night?"

"Aye—yes!" said O'Reilly; but it was by friends, and with your concurrence."

"How know you that it was with my concur-

rence?" returned the guide, sharply. "Could I prevent the sudden rush of many men? Still no evil happened to you. Was I not faithful to my trust from the moment we met? and why at this instant, doubt me?"

"I have one reason," replied O'Reilly. "I cannot have a full confidence in you, because your manners and words are different from those of other men."

"That is not my fault, young man," answered the guide. "You give a bad reason for your doubts of my fidelity. But the time wears—I must not satisfy your prejudice. Fergus will you trust me, and follow whither I guide?"

"I will," said Fergus. "As I have trusted you during the night, I will not doubt you now."

"Well, if I must go with you, Fergus," said the buoyant O'Reilly, "I will go with you with a hearty spirit. I will, though, be even and quits with that fellow before another day is over, for I will know all concerning him. Curse on him! he would not allow me time to bring my pistols. Ah! he shows the villain in that. If he play traitor with us, by—! I shall make sure of him, or my hunting-knife, for once, will not do me good service!"

The reader, I am sure, will understand that the above words were spoken, or muttered, out of the guide's hearing. Frank, though the most forgiving of beings, was out of humour. Many occurrences during the night, particularly the insult from the soldiers on the bridge, and afterwards the escape of D'Arcy, galled his memory. He felt satisfied now, like many with similar feelings, to have an object upon which he could, with some show of reason, vent his displeasure. He was now in better humor since he had partially told his mind to the guide, and he followed his companions into Quay-street with a light and careless step, humming a love song for his own comfort. Frank kept the nearer flags of the street, whilst his companions crossed to the opposite side, probably for the purpose of better examining the lanes before they entered them. When he came to Courthouse-lane he perceived that his companions did not halt, but that they continued, with a quick step, advancing towards the goal. Suddenly he became irresolute. Not inclined to trust the conduct of the guide, which now excited greater doubt, he became at the same time desirous to follow Fergus and defend him if necessary. He had just made the imprudent resolution of calling out to Fergus, to warn him of his danger, and, if he did not attend to him, of using physical force with Murrough, when he was quickly seized from behind. His arms were pinioned before he could resist, and his mouth covered with a kerchief before he could finish the words, "Fergus, help!" Resistance was vain with him. Though a powerful young man, he was held by more than two equally powerful men. He could only mutter, in the folds of his muffling, curses upon his captors. He was hurried along with an impetuosity he could not stop; turned the angle of the building which is now the Custom House; was carried with the same rapidity, for he could scarcely be said to touch ground—through Lower Flood street; was turned into the Square of the Parade, and was hurled by a strong arm through the half-open door of the "Salmon." Fortunately for the safety of Frank's head, he came in contact with the ostler, who was passing through the kitchen at the time. By this the force of his fall was broken, and though he recoiled, and, staggering, fell upon the paved floor, he arose with little or no injury, whilst the unfortunate ostler, with bruised and bloody face, belabored with much exertion as ever did a lusty youth under the discipline of a severe schoolmaster. For some time the terrors of the female portion of the household could not be allayed. They screamed and clapped their hands, with feigned or real fear of having their throats cut, or of a worse evil happening. They were not quiet until Mistress Esther—the first who recovered from the astonishment of Frank's novel mode of entrance—assured them that the door was bolted, and that only one lone man had entered.

"Stop your howling, hussies! Ho!y Virgin! it is Mr. Frank himself! At some of your mad tricks again, I'm certain! Well, it was not kind to come in in this manner, and frighten us nearly out of our lives. Quarrelling with some of the red-coats!" continued the landlady. "They deserve it, I know, the upstarts! But you had enough of this before. You payed well then for the satisfaction of beating the blackguards! What will your father say, oh! Mr. Frank, when he hears of this second business?"

"You need not fear for my pocket, or for my father's either, this time," said Frank, seating himself on a settle, with the greatest composure. "A drink, Mistress Moran, and I shall tell you all that I know about the matter, but not till then."

"Where is the young gentleman, and the other man, Master Frank?"

"I don't know, nor I don't care—a drink of some sort! that's right—not giving you an ill-answer, Mistress Moran. I wish to heaven they were both hanged for base traitors and cowards, as they are! But in truth, Esther, do you think the same guide, or Murrough, or whatever you call him, is real flesh and blood?"

"The guide, Mr. Frank?" said Mistress Moran, with evident confusion of voice and manner. "What could I know about the man? You should know him better than I, I think."

"Well, to tell you my mind, I believe him to be no better than he is—that is, the devil himself, or one of his agents, in man's shape."

"Cross of Christ defend us!" cried the landlady. "Why do you say that, Mr. Frank? Where did you part from him?"

"In Quay-street," replied O'Reilly. "The villain would bring us against our will by the goal guard for his own purposes. I was just about following, when some kind friends—though they handled me rather roughly, I must allow—forced me hither, and placed me under your better protection."

"And did the young gentleman follow him to the goal?" inquired Mrs. Moran anxiously.

"I don't know, mistress," answered Frank, after taking a long draught of ale. "He may follow him to Old Nick if he pleases, for my concern in him. The young fellow deserves his fate for his blind confidence, against my counsel, in that villain, Murrough. Yet I pity the young man. He is in danger, and does not know it. He has some good points about him, and by proper training, if he had not too great a confidence in guides, he would make a fitting companion to gentlemen. To be candid with you, mistress, I had intended to be the making of that young man's fortune; but his own obstinacy has now ruined him. I am not to be blamed. I kept my word promised to his father and to himself. This is all I know about the affair, Esther. In all conscience it is time for bed, for there goes three upon the old clock."

Mistress Esther herself lighted Frank through the corridor to his sleeping room, and as she bade him farewell for the night, she could not help saying: "You may thank your good fortune for falling in with friends who are careful of you. Ah! Mr. Frank, you were not used to keep your secrets from me, though heaven knows I did not care to be the keeper of any gentleman's secrets. You know that I would go far and near, give up house and home—though it's myself who says so—to serve an old friend like you, without any hope of getting a reward from him. But, Mr. Frank," she continued, seeing that her kindness had no effect upon O'Reilly's reserve, "though you think me so blind, because you yourself are so close, I know that there is something at the bottom of all this night's work. Mr. D'Arcy was here after you went out, and that he never was before at such a late hour, and he questioned me about you, and I told him all that I knew, thinking he was still your friend; but I

soon guessed by his manner that he was not. Tom, who went for some message to Maurice Jore's, near the goal, told me that there was a great hubbub there, and that the guards were doubled. Well, good night, and a good rest to you. I see you don't wish I should know all these things; but I will tell you one thing I know, some of your best friends are those who you think are your enemies."

"What does the woman mean?" thought Frank, after closing the door. "I will call her back, and know if D'Arcy had a hand in this last affair. But no, I will wait for morning; perhaps Fergus may return to-night, and explain all."

He threw himself upon his bed, completely calming the sudden anxiety of his mind with this last thought, for he was one of that happy, buoyant temperament, who, if they yield suddenly to the presence of mental or physical evils, as suddenly recover from the incumbent weight. I have closed a chapter before with the slumbers of Frank O'Reilly. I must close this with the same subject, but not under the same circumstances, because he slept not until morning, without any disturbance to his calm, easy, and deep sleep. We must return to the fortunes of a higher personage of the story.

CHAPTER XXI.

So suddenly and cautiously was Frank O'Reilly seized and prevented from crying out, that Fergus thought he followed him until they came to the goal. It was when Murrough bid him stand that he found O'Reilly was not in their company. He listened eagerly to some slight noise which he heard from the upper part of the street, expecting to see or hear his fellow-traveller; it was made by some night-walker passing through Cross-street, and quickly died away. A death stillness was about him, only interrupted by some movement of the sentinels on guard, or by a deadened sound which proceeded from the military watchhouse adjoining the goal. For the first time during the night, Fergus became seriously uneasy. He did not doubt O'Reilly's sincerity, and still he feared something from his absence. He had made up his mind to trust the guide to the last; he, therefore, strove to reject the motives of mistrust which the circumstances of the night supplied against the latter, and which were passing through his mind, the quick motion of feet, from the lane behind him, caught his ear.

"Why stop here?" he whispered to the guide. "Let us return, and meet our companion."

"We must remain," answered the guide, in the same low voice, but with a peculiar emphasis. "These people will pass without observing us. Leave O'Reilly to his own fate; the fool deserves it."

Thus saying, he drew Fergus behind the projection of a buttress, so situated that it screened them from any observation from the lane or the goal. The darkness was so deep, that the guide seemed satisfied that they could not be seen from the side on which they were exposed. He told this to Fergus, and bade him keep a strict silence whilst the newcomers passed, and all would be well: Our young friend perceived there was no means of escaping observation, except in implicit obedience to Murrough's command. He remained, therefore, silent; almost breathlessly awaiting the passing of the strangers. The persons who now approached were three in number; all wrapped in large top-coats of frieze, then commonly worn at night by people of every rank, for they served the purpose of disguise as well as of defence against wet or cold. Fergus saw this; for the strangers passed so near him, one by one, on the flagged path, that the skirts of the coat of the person who was last touched him. He was about congratulating himself on his lucky escape from so near a danger—the circumstances of the night justified him in doubting every stranger, especially in such a locality—when the strangers returned, and stopped within a few feet of the place where he stood.

"Now," thought Fergus, "if they be foes, there is some danger; but if Murrough prove faithful, we are yet a match for them."

He was not long in doubt concerning their dispositions towards him. They had only just halted, when he could distinctly hear one of them say, in low but merry tones:

"We have disposed of that madcap more easily than I had expected. Ha! ha! It will be pleasant to hear his narration of the adventure. He will put it to the score of some old grudge of the army; and some of the red coats, with whom he has eternal enmity, will roar for it. Ha! ha!"

"Just if you will, but laugh less loudly," said a second voice, in a sterner tone, and more thrilling to Fergus, for it recalled D'Arcy's voice to his recollection. "By J—! there is too much silence about us." The next words were lost to Fergus, but immediately after he could catch the sentence: "It were, according to Murrough's promise, we should meet them."

The conviction of the guide's treachery quickly settled upon his mind. His anger arose; and, regardless of any consequence, he turned to Murrough with a raised hand, and said, loudly:

"Villain! I have found you out at last!" The guide was not there. Some minutes before he had glided from the side of Fergus.

"With you, gentlemen, I have no cause of quarrel; neither have you, I think, with me," said Fergus, advancing to the strangers. "By what authority, then, can you stop and assault a stranger come to your town for no evil purposes?"

"You are the son of O'Keane, as he is called," whispered D'Arcy, with malignant satisfaction; "that is enough for me." And then he said, aloud: "We are authorized to arrest and to imprison you, for actions treasonable to our city. To-morrow you shall see our warrant."

"Your best warrant, you should say," answered Fergus. "Is numbers and guile. It is ill boasting now. I submit in the hope of yet defeating your schemes of villainy."

"Fool do you fancy you are the sole or prime object of my vengeance? The lion hunts not down the tame sheep when the noble stag is in view. Randal, on with this peasant fellow to the goal!"

The last words, and the sarcastic tone of the speaker wounded deeply the noble spirit of Fergus. He recollected that the circumstances of his birth and fortune gave a foundation for the taunt. For once in his life, he felt humbled in being O'Keane's son. To what slight causes of opposition or of temptation, does the firmness of our best and most generous sentiments sometimes yield! But it was only for an instant that Fergus was ashamed of his lineage. Humbled by the taunt of D'Arcy; deprived, by one word, of the importance, of the dignity of manner and sentiment which his own natural nobility of mind secretly suggested as his destiny through life; which his education, too, nurtured; and of which the trust lately reposed in him, and the success which attended him up to this moment, had already given him possession—he still felt that D'Arcy spoke from malignant feelings—from the workings of mean and cowardly passion. This calmed his insulted and indignant spirit, and made him feel in his heart a superiority over him who taunted him with ignobility of birth. Moreover, he felt consolation in the cause of his friends. And it occurred to him, just as they led him through the doors of the goal, that Providence had directed his arrest to bring him to free speech with Shemus Dhu, which was one of the principal objects of his to Galway.

CHAPTER XXII.

The exterior of the goal into which our young friend was dragged for the night, was (as it remains

still, though converted into a store) a strong square building, with shot-holes, battlements, and turrets. But the interior! How art thou deserv'd the honorable name with which humanity greets thee! At a sign from D'Arcy, the iron bars fell heavily into their grooves as the door closed with an ominous clang. A rough satellite of the gaoler stood in a low, narrow passage, holding a tallow candle in one hand, the other being armed with a naked sword, rusty, and of such a length, that it was apparent it was more for the form of office, than for any real purpose of offence or defence, it was carried. The sickly light falling upon the heavy and bloated features of this functionary, showed that he had just risen from sleep.

"What now, my masters?" said he in an English accent, to his expected visitors. "Might ye not come as ye said, at an earlier hour, and not disturb us in our night's rest? Ugh! a woeful situation it is, though yet so much value upon it, turning key every hour of the twenty-four, and without any profit. Your prisoners, sirs, and away with you; we have the warrants for them all already."

"John, you might fare worse than in your present situation, and you know it!" said D'Arcy, sternly. "Confine your prisoner closely, but treat him well—you know the place. We will see your governor in the morning."

"I ask your honour's pardon, Mr. D'Arcy," replied the surly porter. "I didn't know you were among the fellows at this late hour. It isn't for me to grumble against the place your honour got me. I shall do your will with the prisoner, until my master takes him in charge."

"Do, then, and be cautious, Nelville."

D'Arcy, with his companions, left the prison. The doors were secured by the turnkey, with the aid of an urchin who came at his call; and Fergus was led, without any remark save a stare from his worthy gaoler—who examined him from head to foot—up a narrow flight of stone steps, and thence into a cell which terminated the first corridor of the prison.

"Your bed is in the far corner there, young fellow; you will feel it an easier one than many get here."

"Shall I have a light?" called out Fergus, as the door closed on him, and left him in total darkness.

"What want you with a light?" asked the turnkey, half opening the door. "I trow a fellow of your strength and appearance is not afraid in the dark. At all events, the night is too far gone for Shemus Dhu's pranks, if you have heard of them, and fear them. Besides, young man, we do nothing out of the way of our usual order without some remuneration."

Fergus immediately understood the spirit of the speaker. He drew from his purse a large silver piece, much greater in value than that which the turnkey could expect. He put it into his hand, not because he then desired the light, or cared to obtain any favors of the same sort, but he had heard his keeper mention Shemus Dhu, and these were the most cheering hopeful words which he had heard since he left the priest's. He was sure now that he was in the same prison with the person whom he so much wanted to see. He already felt hope rising upon the darkness of his prospects, and showing him, though with a vague light, in the distance, a happy termination through his affairs through the agency of Shemus Dhu, of the power of whose protection he had from infancy heard such wonderful reports:

"Why, that is well done, I say, young gentleman," said the turnkey, thrusting the silver money quickly into his pocket. "You who give willingly deserve encouragement. I will share my candle with you for this night, and in the morning I will give you whatever assistance you require in my way of business. You see, sir, you can have comforts here, if you know how to ask them—"

The turnkey would have gone on, weighing the comforts of half a tallow candle, a draught of sour small beer, in expectancy, or such like luxuries, against the highest bounty which the most generous of his prisoners would give, if Fergus did not interrupt him with—

"Good fellow, I shall pay you for that which I want you to do for me out of your ordinary course of business. You spoke of Shemus Dhu; can you let me have speech with him to-night?"

The turnkey stared at Fergus. He appeared to misunderstand his request; and when Fergus repeated it, he struck his head, and said, Oh! oh! young man, whoever you may be, I fear me you are a wild one. Few even after a long residence here, wish to see the 'Black Pedlar,' none wish to be acquainted with him. If you desire seriously to hold converse with him, you must wait until morning, and ask leave from a higher quarter; unless, for ought I know, you are a nearer friend of his than you pretend, and intend holding conference with him this very night, and in this chamber to boot. Good night, young man."

"Hold! for heaven's sake!" exclaimed Fergus, as the turnkey was departing. "Tell me, good fellow, and I will reward you, who this Shemus Dhu is? My affairs are concerned with him, either for my weal or woe. Bring me to him, or let him know that Fergus O'Keane of Portarah is confined here."

"Well, I am glad you are not over intimate with him," said the turnkey, pocketing the second piece of money, which Fergus put into his hand. "I am glad of it, because I feel already an interest in your welfare. As to the question about the Pedlar, every person knows him, and nobody knows him. They say he is good and bad by turns. I could tell you," he continued, lowering his voice almost to a whisper; "many strange stories about him, but strong walls often have ears. However, I shall bring your message to him in the morning; but I advise you to have no close dealings with him."

The turnkey drew the bars upon Fergus, and left him to his gloomy thoughts, without any comfort except the cold light of an inch of tallow candle, that rendered colder and more dismal the damp, low cell. Still there was something of comfort in this miserable light. The power of seeing around him gave him some security. Though he could not tell what danger threatened him, he had a presentiment of some. He felt uneasy, sick in mind; and by the secret sympathy of body and soul, he felt nervous and unwell. He examined the furniture of his apartment. A damp straw pallet, raised upon a low wooden frame, was his bed. Its covering was two homespun, torn cloths, of the coarsest material. A small stool, and a higher one, perhaps serving for the purpose of a table, were its other furniture. There was no water, no vessel, nothing which could serve cleanliness. From the state of the walls, which were encrusted with a white and green scum, it was evident the cell had been long unoccupied; though, as he had been told, it was one of the most comfortable in the goal. Fergus threw himself, without undressing, upon the miserable pallet, his mind filled with a thousand anxieties. He looked, now without thought, and then with the deepest thought—a contradiction only to be reconciled in a like situation to his—upon the candle which was fast burning out before him. He would have thought upon Eveleen solely, and upon the new relationship which had so suddenly arisen between them, had he been in less fearful and gloomy circumstances; but here he was, in the damp small cell a goal, without one friend—with little hope of assistance—to the power of his worst enemies—accused of treason: and still his thoughts often reverted to Eveleen, but with a sadness akin to despair. In other circumstances of danger, the idea of Eveleen would have been the first and sole occupant of his mind; but now it was only mixed, though it was the strongest and largest portion of the mixture, with many other bitter ingredients in

his draught of thought. When he thought of Eveleen, a heaviness came over his heart. He saw the pleasing prospect of happiness and of honor, which his fancy, unknown to him, had formed in connexion with her long, long ago, and had loved to look upon, now destroyed by late circumstances, and became a barren, lightless waste. Some secret feeling, during his journey to Galway, had often bade him to hope against these circumstances, that he would yet have Eveleen's first esteem; and sometimes he thought of an esteem stronger than the esteem of friend for friend—the esteem which is the offspring of a feeling stronger than fraternal love—the esteem of a first deep and true affection. But now, in his gloom, he felt those hopes were forever blasted. He shut out the fear; he could not bear it long and live. He thought also of his father, of his care, his fondness, and his love: and he clasped his hands in a strong agony of grief, when he thought of the desolation his father would feel when he heard of his son's capture, and, perhaps, of his condemnation to death! But as bitters somewhat destroy the strength of other bitters in the draught, he felt, after sometime, more at ease, in considering the many circumstances of his misfortune, than he would have felt had he only one to think deeply upon. His thoughts, in their dismal circuit, then returned to himself—to his doubts about Murrough and to his dangers from D'Arcy. Oh! it was then that he experienced, without adverting to it, the buoyancy of the youthful mind; for, when he thought of himself of his dangers, he found within in his own soul a strength against danger which no power could overcome; he felt a confidence within himself that he would be able to overcome all opposition—that he would yet be happy, because he was determined to be so; and, lastly, he felt a second to this otherwise presumptuous feeling, in the reflection that he was free from crime, innocent of every charge, the victim alone of circumstances which followed from implicit obedience to his father's commands; and, in the spirit of religion which these last thoughts excited, he arose from his bed, threw himself upon his knees, and professed himself reconciled to the will of heaven. The calmness which succeeded these last feelings, acted as a soporific to his anxious spirit, and he fell into that pleasing, half unconscious musing which precedes deep sleep. The last flame of the candle had arisen in the iron socket when Fergus dropped off into a deep slumber. Immediately his dreams brought him to Portarah—to the home of his father and Eveleen. He listened to the tales of the old men, he played with his young companions in the green fields; he attended Eveleen upon the lake and in the woods; he heard her sweet voice rising upon the evening breeze, beneath the castle walls; he was instantly by her side, and in his dream had a feeling of pleasure and happiness, more exquisite than any which in reality he ever had felt. Suddenly the scene changed. He saw his dearest friend struck dead before him; he was running through an unknown country from the pursuit of his enemies; he was taken; led to death; a rope was about his neck, and the features of the executioner, whom he vaguely confounded with the guide, scowled with revenge upon him as he was just hurled from the gallows-tree. He awoke with a convulsed groan, and, starting from the bed, he struck against some form which hung over him. "Guardian angels of night protect me!" were his first words. And then he asked, in a tone of very natural terror, "Who is there?"

"Your friend," said a hoarse voice near him, "if you speak low and listen—in no circumstance your enemy."

"Come you from Shemus Dhu?" said Fergus. "By your voice you are not he. If you come not from him I cannot hope for assistance from you."

"Be satisfied; I come for your good," replied the unknown.

"I held no communication with you," returned Fergus, retreating from the neighbourhood of the voice as far as the dimensions of the room would allow, and putting himself in a posture of resisting any attack which might be made upon him—unless you tell your name and the purport of this visit."

"Young man, I do not blame your suspicions," answered the voice. "God knows we have too much reason to suspect our best friends! Still, be confident that I am your friend, the friend of your family, and of the cause which has brought you to Galway."

"I might have believed you yesterday," said Fergus; "but I have seen enough of deceit to-night to put me on my guard against the strongest protestations. What proof do you give me that you are not my enemy?"

"I might convince you in one moment, yet the time is not come," the unknown said. "Still, as my business with you is of importance to you and my best hopes, I will give you some reasons to trust me. I speak to Fergus of Portarah, the son of Connel O'Keane, the reputed brother of Eveleen O'Hall—"

"O, what?" exclaimed Fergus, rushing forward. "Say it, for mercy's sake, and you will make me your friend for ever!"

"Ha! young man, if you are so soon excited, I must be more reserved."

"Do not, for heaven's sake! I give you my full confidence, for I know you understand me and my affairs better than I myself," said Fergus.

"Be less excited, and speak in a lower voice, and you shall hear many things connected with your interests," said the unknown. And then he continued, after bidding Fergus to seat himself upon a low bed, and occupying a place near him: "If I have your confidence, Fergus, answer me without guile."

"Speak," said Fergus. "If I do not answer, my answer will be true."

"First, then," asked the stranger, "what think you of the fidelity of your guide, Murrough?"

"I believe him to be a villain. He has played me false. He has brought me purposely into danger, and now he exults over my misfortune," answered Fergus.

"Think, young man," asked the stranger, "may he not still be your friend? May he not have acted for your good—obliged to appear your enemy from circumstances which you cannot understand?"

"I believe it not!" said Fergus, in a louder voice. "He is a false-hearted villain, and I shall never again put faith in him!"

"Well, let that pass. At least, it is possible you may change your opinion of him," said the stranger. "The next question is, What think you of Eveleen, your sister? But I need not say the word. You know her now not to be your sister; yet you know not who she is. What think you of her disposition towards you?"

"Stranger, I know not what you mean," replied Fergus, with warmth. "If you speak questioning her amiability, her sincerity, her virtues, her goodness in every respect, I call him, whoever he may be, slanderer and coward, who dare to gainsay them."

"It is as I suspected," said the stranger, in a low voice, yet heard by Fergus, though it was scarcely a whisper. "Young man," he continued, in a louder voice, "beware of deceiving me. Answer me from your soul; you had opportunity to judge accurately, and you have penetration above other men. What are your opinions of the character of the stranger whom your father has received kindly without question? And what is his conduct towards your sister, and hers towards him?"

The question was put so unexpectedly, was so complicated, involving fears and hopes which he knew were most intimately connected with his happiness or with his misery—though how far connected, even in his calmest moment of thought, he feared to consider—that he remained silent.

(TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.)