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SHAWN NA SOGGARTH; OR, THE PRIEST-HUNTER.

AN IRISH TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES. BY M. ARCHDEACON, ESQ., Author of the Legends of Connaught, &c.

CHAPTER XX.

Sir John was striding to and fro in his study the morning succeeding the attack. There was a deeper gloom on his brow, as he flung an occasional menacing glance from the letter he was reading, to his vile agent, Shawn, who was standing near the door, with sullen doggedness in his aspect, except that, now and then, when Sir John's back was to him, there was on his face a villainous leer, as if he were enjoying his superior's annoyance.

"So," said Sir John, in a stern tone, as he halted abruptly, "last night's business will tell finely for me in Dublin, after having received such a rebuff from the Castle already. And you, ruffians, to proclaim that the scum of rapparees were urged on by the scoundrel, priest Kilger, whom you have sullered to loiter about in the district, contrary to your duty and directions."

"But how, your noble honor, Sir John," asked Shawn, sullenly, "am I to hunt the priest down, if they're to get shelter from him that's ped for makin' Protestants, as well as from outspoken an' relapsed papists?"

"Silence, rascal," said Sir John, sternly;—"attempt no lying defence, I have trust-worthy information that you slept under the same roof with Kilger, without attempting to apprehend him. But, by the bones of Black Dick, (an ancestor the baronet was fond of making adjuration by when much excited) if you do not speedily atone for your drunken negligence, by his capture, I will make short work in sending you on as long a voyage as any priest among them."

"To be sure, your noble honor can do just whatever it pleases you to do. But whoever gets you the information about Kilger, I have as sartin evidence that parson Gordon, himself, shelters papists an' relapsed papists, an' that the cottage is still a din for every stragglin' priest to shelter himself in; an' how can I do my duty in fairness, when such doin's as that is put up with?"

"And here comes Mr. Gordon, in time to disprove your assertion, or he shall hear more about it."

The rector was admitted, immediately followed by Ffoliot, while Aaron Andrews, who had accompanied Mr. Gordon, remained in the area abroad, his sturdy independence firing at the idea of standing in the hall till he should be called in.

"Sir John, Sir John," said Ffoliot, bursting out vehemently on his entrance, "these are dreadful times when a man's house is attempted to be burned almost in your very presence—the king's troops are shot at, and a man loses his nearest and dearest relative by a violent death, merely because he was sanguinely and fearlessly loyal in a rebellious and desperate district. But there must be vengeance for this—" he slapped his hand across his brow as he leant against the window for a moment, as if overpowered by grief and vexation, though Sir John shrewdly suspected there was more of retraction in the matter than men, however desperate, should have had the presumption to attack his house, than grief for the loss of a brother, through whose death money was to be gained.

"And vengeance there shall be, Mr. Ffoliot," rejoined Sir John: "though I must be of opinion that, if the proprietors of property could be brought to feel and exhibit the same bold fearlessness which the authorities practice, the cowardly rabble would seldom dare to venture such attacks as that of last night. But how is it, Mr. Gordon, (turning to that gentleman) that your name comes to be mixed up with the sheltering of papists, and thus, in some measure, inciting and encouraging lawlessness?"

"That I would be among the first to prevent and discourage acts of aggression and outrage is so widely known, that it is but a waste of words to assert it now. As regards my acts and opinions in reference to other matters, they have been known to you, Sir John, of long standing; and in that respect, without infringing on existing laws, I shall continue to act as I think befits a gentleman and a Christian pastor."

"And do you think if Christian or gentleman-like to sympathise with such as defy the laws, attack houses and commit midnight murder?" asked Ffoliot, with some vehemence.

"I must claim the privilege of being allowed to form my own estimate of crimes and the causes that produce them, at the same time that I deplore as deeply as any one can, the daring attack on your house, Mr. Ffoliot, and your melancholy bereavement in consequence."

"An' Mr. Ffoliot needn't be too hard on the tenants either, your noble honor," said Shawn, boldly edging in his word, "seem' that his own

son takes good care to visit an' cumfort a papist lady purty of'n, as Mr. Gordon could bair witness to, if he liked."

"To tell the truth, Sir John," observed the rector, avoiding all reference to Shawn's allusion, "much as I sympathise in Mr. Ffoliot's great loss, it is not in reference to his concern in last night's unfortunate affair that I have come here this morning. We all know you will spare neither time nor energy to make the offenders expiate their foul and daring crime; and as my time is limited, in consequence of Maria's having received a severe shock through the terrors of the last night, perhaps you will permit me to say at once, that my present visit to you is owing to a serious charge by a parishioner of mine against the troop-serjeant-major in command of the dragoons last night; the charge is the abduction of his daughter, an only child, during the confusion of the proceedings."

"By the bones of Black Dick, the last seems to be a night of adventures with a vengeance. But who is the parishioner?—perhaps it is some scoundrel papist?"

"No, Sir John; he is the industrious and improving proprietor of the foundry, Aaron Andrews."

"Ha! Andrews must be protected, and righted too, if he has been injured. Let the unwieldy parcel of flesh and Captain Aylmer appear before us;—quick—quick."

Shawn flew to execute the message; and he was instantly followed by Ffoliot, who wished to question him, and who felt no interest in the investigation to ensue.

The captain and his subordinate were speedily in the study, into which Aaron also was admitted at the same time.

"Well, Andrews," asked Sir John, on the former's entrance, "what proof have you of the charge you make against this fellow?"

"My maiden, Hetty Matthews, Sir John, hearkened till the whole scheme; and she's ready and willin' to mak an affidavit of what she overheard at the elm tree. She'll swear, moreover, Sir John, that he pursued herself, other, till her terror and danger, for more nor a quarter mile, until he fell soose intill a ditch."

"Well, sirrah," said Sir John, "you hear Andrews' charge against you; what have you to say?—aye—sirrah."

The serjeant's jolly, well colored face blazed like a girl's, as, after some stammering attempts, he got out:

"I'm not going to deny, Sir John, that the gal might 'ave a likin' for me, wot was natrel—"

"Bessy Andrews a likin' for sic a porpus?" interrupted her father, vehemently: "sae far fra it, that it was wif difficult she could be induced to come intill the parlor, when I used, like a fule, to invite ye in, thinkin' ye wor a God-fearin' and a straight-forward mon, offer ye rescued me fra the rioters on the road, you market night. But gin she ganged wif ye, wif her ain consent, ye maun hae resorted till witchcraft for it."

"Why, truly," observed Sir John, a smile flitting across his dark features, "he seems rather an extraordinary Romeo for so fair a Juliet. But, sirrah, did you, in fact, take away the girl, whether with or against her own consent? no equivocation."

"Nay, Sir John. I will not deny that the gal and myself 'ad a parley at the helm tree, and that we'd 'agreed that she should helope with me. But, 'owever she went, I never set a heye on her from that 'our to this, as my comrades can make affidavit on, seein' as 'ow that I was never 'out of their sight, the 'ole time."

"Hearken not till the villain!" exclaimed Andrews, eagerly. "God knows where he has her concealed this moment. O, Sir John, gin I could bring myself to kneel till mortal mon, I wad bend at yer feet, to implore ye to see restored till her father, an affectionate child, reared in the ways of duty and morality, till a villain tempted her fra the path. Remember, Sir John, ye once had barns yersel', and that I'm pleadin' for my daughter—the only child of her mother that was dearer till me nor land nor gold—aye, dear as the apple of my eye."

"If I were certain," rejoined Sir John, started if not affected by Aaron's earnest appeal;—"Aylmer, what has been this fellow's character heretofore?"

"The steadiest and most exemplary in the troop."

"Then he's an impostor, I'll swear till it," said Aaron, eagerly.

"You will excuse the vehemence of poor Andrews, under the circumstances, Sir John," said the rector; "and you know he has always sustained the character of being a man of the most unimpeachable credit and veracity."

scheme of his own, instead of performing his duty like an active and a cautious soldier. At all events, see you that the barracks be minutely searched for the girl, as well as all the haunts of himself and comrades, in the town. I shall have the neighboring locality so strictly searched, that a cat could not remain undiscovered, and if the fellow be found to have been concerned in the abduction of a loyal Protestant's daughter, by the bones of Black Dick, short time shall he have for repentance in this world."

"I seek not the mon's blude, nor his downfall," said Aaron, "let him bot gi' back till me my daughter unharmed, and he shall hae e'en mair gold nor ever he could expect wif her."

"No, no, Andrews," exclaimed Sir John;—"justice shall not be compromised. If he can restore her to you for money, I'll take care he shall do so without it, or black will be his fate."

"Nay, Sir John," remonstrated the bewildered and crest-fallen serjeant, "you aint agoing to bang a man without judge or jury. I can prove—easily can I—by my comrades, as I'd neither 'and, haet or part in the gals abduction, hatched as I know she was to me, and hankious as I was as we should be joined in 'oly wedlock."

"So much the better for yourself if you are stating the truth. See, Captain Aylmer, that the search be most strict; and let Heaviesides be kept in confinement till you hear from me again."

"It shall be done, Sir John," said the officer, as he departed with his wronged and chopfallen subordinate.

"Now, Gordon," resumed the Baronet, when they were alone, "I would advise you strongly to turn a new leaf in your book, or rather to take a leaf from mine. You see that lenity and forbearance only embolden those rascally mere Irish to outrage and insurrection. Thank God, I, at least, cannot accuse myself of encouraging them by mistaken forbearance."

"Neither does my conscience accuse me for having sympathy for the children of misfortune and suffering, though surely not with the intention of encouraging them to crime."

"Aye, but it has had the effect you see, as outrage is at present limited, in this county, to your district."

"No, no, Sir John, I deny the inference *in toto*. You know that my opinion, of long standing, has been that it is cruelty and harshness that have been the provocations to crime, and that it is the authorities that have need to turn a new leaf, and try to produce order and submission, by mildness instead of severity. But we will not continue to argue where we have no likelihood of agreeing; and I see, by that pile of papers, that you are full of business."

"Yes, yes, we are pretty sure to have abundance of despatches while we have such actors as those of last night, astir. In some of these I have myself got a hard rap over the knuckles for—what you would never have thought of accusing me of—my remissness and want of energy in keeping down popery; and I imagine you may expect a much severer blow unless you change your system speedily."

"Then let it come, Sir John; an approving conscience will be my armor of proof."

The rector and Andrews now made their bows, the latter somewhat re-assured by the zeal with which Sir John, whose dreaded power and untiring vigilance he was well aware of, took up the abduction.

They had been but a short time gone when Ffoliot re-entered, exclaiming vehemently,—"Those Lynchs are certainly a damnable set. Do you know it was one of them, I am informed, that headed the attack last night, in which my poor dear brother—oh!" he put his hand to his face for a moment, as if unable to proceed—"you will excuse my weakness, Sir John; but I cannot speak or think of my terrible misfortune with any calmness."

"Pshaw man," said the baronet, eyeing him sternly, "Its natural we should grieve for the loss of a brother, particularly cut off in such a manner; but we are made of sterner stuff than to faint for it. But which of these Lynchs has been concerned in last night's outrage?"

"Frank Lynch, Sir Robert's cousin, and whom you will recollect, Sir John, report states to be connected with a band of smugglers."

"Ha! has that wild bird winged his flight to these shores again?"

"It appears so, and I understand there were some seamen—doubtless smugglers—aiding and assisting him also. Those Lynchs are becoming, daily, greater eyesores to the country, and it would add to the security and comfort of every loyal man, if they were completely weeded out of it."

"Why the head of them, Sir Robert, is taking all the means in his power to rid the country and the world fast of his incumbrance; and if he but continues his present career of riot and debauchery, I should fancy the lease of his life, ere another year be past, would be but of little

value, even should the termination of his journey be not accelerated by a bullet or a fall.

"I am by no means so confident of that, Sir John; the Lynchs are a long lived race. And then there's that pale faced hussey of a recusant. Don't you think, Sir John, it would be a great advantage to us both if she were out of the country?"

"Why to you, Ffoliot, it would be an advantage; but I can't see how her existence at all can affect me."

"Suppose, Sir John, she was induced to become a conformist, would she not then be an additional barrier? And I do confess that, as that green boy of mine cannot, you see, be deterred, by threats or entreaties from continuing his visits to her, whatever bewitchment she has thrown over him, I should be most delighted if she were removed. Would to God indeed she were once out of his reach, as his senses would then, of course, return to him."

"Well there is a good deal, Ffoliot, in what you have said respecting her possible change of creed, and which, I will admit, did often strike me before: and as I see what you are driving at, to come to the point at once, I shall not overrule any plan you may have for changing her residence and country, always, providing that no violence or injury shall be offered to a lady born, recusant though she be."

"I would not presume to form a plan without your sanction first, Sir John. It only occurred to me that, if she were conveyed across the sea, she might, without changing her faith, by being induced to take the veil, be effectually debarred from interfering further with your your views or mine."

"A feasible plan enough, I must say; and I bethink me that there is an Ursuline convent near Rheims, the priores of which would, I know, take some pains for my sake. Poor Agnes! had we met earlier, or your haughty friends been less stern and unbending, the world might wear a brighter aspect for us both, and this steeled heart be not altogether rugged and desolate as now?" He strode to the window—put his hand to his eyes—turned suddenly and asked in a tone of much harshness, "Well, Ffoliot, have you any more eligible plan in your eye?" as if ashamed and irritated that any one should witness the burst of emotion he could not for the moment control.

"No, Sir John," exclaimed Ffoliot, delightedly; "your arrangement is just the portion of the plan I could not myself have accomplished, and which will crown the work. No one would take the same pains for me as for you; and I am, I must venture to say, Sir John, too remarkable for my zealous loyalty to have a sincere friend among the recusants, either here or on the continent."

"Then the plan is easy of accomplishment.—But it must be quietly and cautiously carried out, lest that noisy, debauched rector, if he gets scent of the matter, he will make more noise than might be just pleasant. The most delicate part of the business will be to procure a vessel, to convey the girl speedily and secretly to where she can give no more annoyance."

It was then arranged that Ffoliot and Shawn and a party, should visit the cottage the ensuing day, with the double object of searching for Father Kilger and ascertaining the usual position of its inmates.

CHAPTER XXI.

On the evening of the day, the proceedings of which have been detailed in the last chapter, our old acquaintance, Charley Rourke, was proceeding towards the castle in order to consult Sir John respecting an extensive smuggling transaction of which he had received information. His own residence was, as before stated, in one of the suburbs, and he was passing along some plots, through which there was a by-path that shortened his way, when his ear was attracted by the voices of two persons a little in advance of him. One of them struck him as familiar; and passing the parties hastily a few yards, he turned, and, having scrutinized them for a moment, approaching immediately again, said, in a low and laughing tone,

"Why, Master Frank Lynch, though you've deepened your Milesian complexion to a true Creole pitch, you must alter your voice, too, before you can be entirely mistaken; and I would advise you not to depend too much on your transformation, even at this hour, as I can tell you a strict search is abroad;—you understand me. Perch yourself, with your youthful companion, in Madden's hotel, till I see you again in an hour. I have something to say to you, and I would serve you for old recollections' sake."

The pair addressed started; but Charley passed on with a significant motion of the hand, but without further words.

Charley was in general an accepted guest at the castle when the baronet was disengaged, owing to his fund of humorous anecdote, skill in all kinds of sports and games and other social qualities.

On this evening he was, as usual, instantly admitted, and found Sir John with wine, brandy and papers before him.

"Ha, Charley! be seated—help yourself, and tell us what the news stirring in our good borough later than last night's attack."

"Why, Sir John," responded Charley, after having complied with the baronet's request, "the last rumor was—though I fear it's not gospel—that you had turned papist, and that Ffoliot is appointed to the governorship."

"Ha, Ha, you will, I see, like greater and better men, have your jest to the end; but did you meet Ffoliot to-day? That was an awkward occurrence last night, though he's playing off too much grief for the loss even of a brother."

"By the bones of St. Ruth—pardon me for the oath, Sir John—Ffoliot, in getting ten or twelve thousand pounds by old Isaac's fall, ten or fifteen years earlier than he could have calculated on, is little more grieved in reality than would be your humble servant, Sir John, to hear of the demise of one of their high mightinesses, the surveyors general, and that his place fell to Charley Rourke."

"Ha, ha, good! But were you talking with Ffoliot and was he caunting?"

"Yes, Sir John, and he caunted like Parson—(but I won't vex you, Sir John, by naming names); and then the old sinner looked as chapfallen as he did the day I choused him of the prog, six years ago at the shore. Did I ever tell you the story; but you're perhaps in no humor for a story now."

"I'm just in the vein—help yourself again, Charley—as I've had a dose of business to nauseousness for the day; and if you tell it in your best style, you may do more than the wine to sweeten my blood."

"Well then," began Charley, after having emptied his glass with a smack, and filled another without putting the baronet to the trouble of repeating his solicitation, "you remember, Sir John, the remarkable year that the Dutch snigger showed fight and killed some of his majesty's seamen in the bay?"

"Aye, to be sure I do—the year you were brought over the coals for being so terribly visited with loss of sight as to pass by the brandy and tobacco in the broad day-light."

"O very well, Sir John," rejoined Charley, as he emptied and filled again, "I owe you one for that. Any way, Ffoliot and myself were stopping for a few days' sporting at Bob Coghlan's, that, now that he's dead, we may venture to say, made more of defrauding the king's revenue for the last twenty years than all the other men on the coast, though his venison, his fish and his brandy got him the patronage of us all, from the governor (bowing) down to the humble gauger. Well, one evening of great revelry—by the way, Sir John, this brandy is as good as if it was smuggled—the magistrate and myself, in our boastings, made a bet as to which of us should bag the most game in two or three hours of the next day, for Ffoliot was certainly then a fine shot, and I needn't say I could pull a sure trigger myself. However, my intention was not to strive with him then, but to play the skinflint, a prank that would be remembered to him. Accordingly, the next morning, after we had given our heads a plentiful immersion in cold water, swallowed some tumblers of hot milk punch instead of soda-water or buttermilk, and punished a breakfast that would have made a greenhorn stare, after a hard night's work, we prepared to set out on the shooting watch."

"Ye were cool and steady then."

"One of us didn't want to be steady, Sir John."

"Well, Bill Ffoliot, says myself, 'as we're to remain out for three or four hours, surely we'll require some refreshments with us, after the night.'"

"Small blame to you for that idea, any way which is worthy of Charley Rourke," says our host, laughing; "and by Jove you shall have the remains of the decanter and the ham, if you want it, particularly as we're sure to have the port, you know; (the bet was half-a-dozen of port)."

"Oh, disre a doubt," says I, "but we'll all have it at Bill's expense."

"Faith, Charley, you'll have to borrow the price or to run tick for it," says Bill, winking and examining his flint.

"Bebber shin," (may be so) says myself; "but by the piper that played before Moses, I'm under a great mistake, or there'll be an item of half-a-dozen of port added to Bill's six folio'd account. Nuddy, Nuddy, (the boy that was to carry the refreshments) put the ham under,—it can bear crashing,—and the bottle on the top, as it is brittle; put the bread between them and the tow—there, that'll do now."

"But when and where'll meet, Charley?" says Bill.

"It's now past twelve," says myself, boldly; "let us meet at two, hardby the little stream at the tuck mill, to snack. Then let us shoot for