

SHEMUS DHU, THE BLACK PEDDLER OF GALWAY

A TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES.

CHAPTER XXXII.—Continued

We are sorry that our story obliges us not to recount a day scene with light one, otherwise many beauties could be pointed out of the Connemara mountains, of Lough Corrib, of Knockshane lake, and of the Knockraun hills, which form from this spot a tout ensemble well worthy the labours of the sketcher, whether those of pen or pencil.

Eveleen sat for a few moments, not noticing the scene, but, recalled from the confident feelings of plety to the difficulties of her situation, she suddenly arose, and asked D'Arcy whether he led her. When he answered not, except by stretching forth his arms, without arising, to regain the prize she conjured him by every tie which bound man to woman, child to parent, man to hope of happiness, to restore her to her father. The appeal was made to one who had often outraged the tenderest feelings of humanity, who cared not for father, brother or friend, when or where his own interests or passions were to be consulted.

"Eveleen," said D'Arcy, rising from the rock upon which he was seated, and moving quickly towards her, when he perceived that she had gone nearer to the lake than was safe—"Eveleen, my love, I have loved you from the moment in which I first saw you. I have never loved before. A new spirit has come over me within these few hours. I will not be content until you are mine. Say you love me, and I will give peace to you and to your father, to Connel, to Fergus. Say only the words, 'I love you, Reginald D'Arcy'."

"Love you!" exclaimed Eveleen, as she strove to make her voice, tremulous from fear and excitement, bold and defying. "Love you! As well, D'Arcy, might you ask the little bird to love the hawk, which suddenly seizes on it for destruction. Bestore me to my friends; cease your persecution of them—I will then give you an answer. But, no, she said, quickly correcting the words, "D'Arcy there will be no compromise between us. I can never—nor will ever—love thee."

The last words were uttered with a dignified strength, which virtue, firm in its purpose, can alone assume. D'Arcy was confounded, not by the sentiment, but the manner. He stood for a minute without speech, and then suddenly exclaimed, seizing Eveleen:

"Then, by—! you are mine. I care not for your love. Ho! there, Harrison—come on!"

Between Harrison and Kathleen, a scene somewhat similar had occurred. Eveleen was passive in D'Arcy's hands. Resistance was vain. She followed him, resolved to oppose every evil, though trembling—it was her woman's nature—under his grasp. It may have been for the purpose of reconnoitring that D'Arcy had ascended this hill, though he was obliged to retrace the inlet before he could join Lewis at the station which he appointed for him. Whatever was his motive for coming hither, he retraced the same steps gloomier and quicker. When they came to the water, he perceived a single person coming towards them across the stepping-stones. It was Lewis, who called aloud, when he observed them preparing to pass over, to go quickly back, for their enemies were near them. D'Arcy waited for his son, and learned from him that many men had chased them on the road; that he had given the care of the four horses to Harrison's servant; that with difficulty he had escaped from his pursuers; and that some of them had followed him through the fields, and now were within a short distance of him.

"If this be the case, Harrison," said D'Arcy, turning to his companion, who had overheard the conversation, "we must look to our own safety—yet we will not relinquish our fair companions, if we can."

"Certainly not," said Harrison. "Yet where, D'Arcy, can we find safety?"

"The lake, my friend," said D'Arcy. "In a cavern of the rocks, not far from this, there is a boat O'Reilly and I, a few days back, placed it where none but ourselves could find it. We can escape by water to the place where Lewis has ordered the horses to await us; or if this be dangerous, we may lie concealed among the islands, without suspicion, until we get notice of a free road for our journey. Come quickly; I hear the shouts of men approaching nearer to us."

"I must obey you, D'Arcy," muttered Harrison; "but this one act of obedience over, I will consult for myself."

They supported the tottering steps of their weaker companions among the rocks and brushwood, which grew thickly along the shore. They found the boat in the place in which D'Arcy had left it a few days before. It was a fragile little boat, flat bottomed, covered with skins, and not capable of carrying with safety more than two persons. Lewis was the first to enter it, and move it from its recess into the open waves of the lake; Eveleen was forced after; and D'Arcy leaped in, sending the tiny bark, by the impetus which he gave it, some yards into the angry waters.

"Hold there!" cried Harrison, as he perceived there was no movement on D'Arcy's part to return for him; "you are surely not determined to leave me here?"

"I fear," said D'Arcy, "the boat would not carry us all with safety. When we land on the next island, I will send Lewis with the boat for you."

"D'Arcy, I did not expect this treatment from you," said Harrison, with intense passion. "Shove back to us; the enemies which I have made for your sake are near us. Shove to; it is not late yet to save us all."

"It cannot be," said D'Arcy, coldly. "Lewis will return for you in a few minutes; or if you fear discovery before the time, you will find many places along the shore which will defy search. Your companion will make you comfortable for a few hours. We will know where to find you."

"False-hearted villain!" exclaimed Harrison, in the height of anger. "I was a fool not to know you before. Was it for this treatment I have come so far to serve you, and to make my name detestable to every honorable person, in being associated with yours in this wicked action? Shove to us, else, by—! I will have my revenge."

"You are a fool, Harrison," said D'Arcy, tauntingly, "to abuse like a woman after this manner. You are well aware it was for your sake and pleasure I have put my life in peril. No matter, I will not accuse you; but I must leave you to cool your passion and to gain sense from a few hours' reflection among the rocks. Good night, my friend; I shall see you in the morning betimes."

"Hold, villain! for your own sake," cried Harrison, furiously. "If you move without me, I swear I will have my revenge. I am desperate, and I will make you my victim as soon as any other—"

"Nonsense man; I cannot wait to hear you folly, look well to your safety. They are ascending the hill; I cannot wait to parley with them. Fare thee well, Harrison."

D'Arcy threw the oar, which he held upright, into its lock; Lewis did the same; and the little skiff was dancing forward, when a ball from Harrison's pistol whizzed by his ear.

"I thank you, Harrison," shouted D'Arcy. "I am balked of my revenge," he thought to himself. "They are ascending the bank, he cannot escape them."

It was as D'Arcy thought. Harrison in a moment was on the bank, and after a slight struggle, sub-

mitted to be captured by Shemus Dhu and his companions.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

D'Arcy never regarded Eveleen during the colloquy we have described, feelings secure of her possession. He witnessed the capture of Harrison, and he could perceive, in the moonlight, that many men were running along the shore, and at length that they had found a boat, and were in pursuit of him.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "it is more than I thought of. Oh! for some sturdy hands of my acquaintance and they would then experience the folly of their pursuit! As it is, Lewis," addressing his companion, "my boy, we will sell our lives at a dear rate."

"Never mind me, sir," replied Lewis, before D'Arcy had done speaking. "They have more and stronger men than we in their strokes. Let's gain the island and we will match their strength and numbers by cunning, or else—and he pointed to the quiet form of Eveleen, gathered, without a motion, in the bows of the boat—"we will have our revenge."

"No, Lewis," answered D'Arcy, energetically, "my revenge belongs not to you; I will shape its form. The girl must be preserved."

"To whom else should your revenge belong? You told me I was your son," said Lewis, with a manner denoting more opposition than obedience to the will of his father. "By—! if I must die, I will not die degenerate in spirit; I will have my satisfaction over your enemies, by sending that weak creature to herald our triumph over them. Ho! they cry to us to hold. You, sir, can parley with them better than I—speak to them."

"What will you do?" said D'Arcy, raising his voice to its highest pitch.

"Give us the lady," said a voice from the pursuing boat, which was one or two hundred yards behind them, but which, even at that distance, D'Arcy recognized immediately as Shemus Dhu's—"give us the lady, safe and we will allow you and your companions to go free until morning."

"What right have you to interfere with my will regarding Eveleen, or the lady as you call her?" said D'Arcy, on whose mind the impression was suddenly made, that he had great influence over the pursuing party by the possession of Eveleen, and could make any terms which he pleased.

"I have authority higher than you think of, insolent man," spoke the same voice. "I claim her as unlawfully possessed by you—forcibly dragged from her father's house against her will; and, moreover, know that I am authorized by the governor and mayor to seize you, and bring you prisoner to Galway."

"And who may you be, pray, thus authorized?" said D'Arcy, wishing to conceal his knowledge of the speaker.

"You pretend that you know me not," replied Shemus Dhu. "But, beware! I will pursue you to the death, if you resist. If you give up the lady peaceably I will give you a chance of escape."

"An excellent minister of their will, the governor and council have got, who compromise his duty with his feelings of friendship, or of a softer feeling perhaps," said D'Arcy, with an attempt of sarcasm in his tones, though at that moment his heart was oppressed with fears. "If you pursue me further, he added, "it will be at the loss of the girl's life. I can not what happens afterwards."

"Wicked man!" replied Shemus Dhu. "What more, then, will you have for her safety?"

"Send me," said D'Arcy, "a certain trustworthy, faithful, and true friend, called Shemus Dhu, if you can find him, as a pledge of my safety—he must swim to me; and then I vow by everything most sacred to you and to me, I will deliver Eveleen O'Halloran to her father. Time is lost by us in speaking on any other condition."

There was a confusion of voices in the boat of Shemus Dhu at this announcement; it suddenly subsided; and the voice of Fergus O'Keane was heard saying distinctly:

"We accept your conditions. Shemus Dhu is here; he goes alone through the water to you. But how will you send us Eveleen?"

"If Shemus Dhu come, I will place Eveleen safe upon the opposite shore."

"It is agreed," said Fergus. "But remorseless vengeance will follow you if you fail in your promise, or if evil happen to Shemus Dhu."

The Peddler is able to protect himself," was the only answer.

The noise of a plunge in the water was heard by D'Arcy. It was the leap of Shemus Dhu into the waves, in opposition to his companions' wishes, devotedly offering himself to the dangers of angry waters, of furious storm, and what was more fearful, and of which he was not ignorant, of the excited hatred of the most wicked of men. When he heard the plunge, D'Arcy arose in the boat; his son remarked his face glowing with delight; it seemed the anticipated joy of a friend over the destruction of a mortal for whom he had long laid snares, but whom he at last caught within his meshes of temptation. Lewis was at his elbow; his countenance assumed a corresponding furtive gleam. He whispered to D'Arcy:

"I will make sure of the girl. What will you do to him?"

"To him? To Shemus Dhu?" said D'Arcy, with a low chuckle of delight, under which every feature was distorted.

"I will torture him in his agony amid the waves—ha! ha! I will tell him, with words burning to his heart, what he is now, and what he could have been. I will feast—aye, glut, if I have time, my deep, strong appetite of revenge against him. I will sink him deep, a million feet deep, if I could, into the lake; but, first, I will hear his gurgle of death; when the waters rush into his mouth, I will laugh with joy; and if he cry for mercy to the God in whom he has belief, before the prayer is from his heart, I will crush his skull, and beat out his brains—aye, even, if it requires it, I will leap into the water, and, with my own destruction, I will have revenge."

This fearful answer to his son, was spoken in a solemn, low, and deliberate tone, and word by word. So far from terrifying Lewis, the words excited in him hope and joy—the hope that his father would succeed, and joy that his father was the terrible being who alone could command his obedience. Lewis had revered D'Arcy before he knew him to be his father. His boldness, his recklessness of danger, his capability of intrigue, his superiority over the herd of dissemblers, had long taken possession of the youth's fancy, and, under the circumstances in which he was educated, of his heart, long before people could think that he would have those feelings. And now he adored, more than revered, D'Arcy for giving utterance to thoughts so congenial to his own, and so sublime in the order of dark and hardened implety. The son was like his father in heart; the only difference between them was that D'Arcy had been early educated in virtue, and sometimes felt remorse, though its power to alter his purpose of evil was transient; and Lewis, from infancy, was reared with bad example, without knowledge, or the hopes or fears which it produces—was abandoned to his passions, obeyed every impulse of them, and would perpetrate the worst crime calmly and deliberately, without remorse. D'Arcy had made up his mind to be revenged, even at the sacrifice of his life. Lewis knew his father's mind; he went further, in diabolical feeling; he was resolved, in any event, to sacrifice his feelings, by a self-act of destruction; any daring to such a mind was without fear.

Shemus Dhu weighed well the consequences of his leap into the water, though he had but a moment to deliberate. He knew D'Arcy's unrelenting ven-

deativeness; he knew that he himself was its object; yet he knew that unless he exposed himself to the danger, D'Arcy would perform his threat, and Eveleen would become his victim. D'Arcy was at bay, and the desperation of a resolved wicked man is more terrible in its consequences than the fury of the lioness when her cubs are stolen. However, hope did not entirely desert Shemus Dhu. The many adventures of danger he had encountered, the many risks of life he had run without harm, had sometimes made him believe that his life was a fated one; at least they had strengthened his constitutional fearlessness. Moreover, it occurred to him that he was performing the sublimest act of devoted friendship; and when are the good down-hearted in the voluntary performance of an act of virtue? Enthusiasm, no doubt, to some extent, supports them; but there is another feeling, holier and supernatural, which animates them, and gives them joy. Shemus Dhu felt it. He trusted in Providence as his chief support. He was a powerful swimmer; the waves pass rapidly by him as he advanced to the boat. Had his companions leisure to remark it they would have admired his feats. Only once, amid the turmoil of the water, did he appear in danger; a wave larger than usual rolled with unexpected quickness upon him, and covered him. D'Arcy yelled through fear that his prey had escaped him; he urged his boat towards him; but when the wave had passed, Shemus Dhu arose again upon the water as buoyant as before. He was now within a few yards of D'Arcy, and he buoyed himself upon the water.

"Now to the shore, Mr. D'Arcy," said Shemus; "I will follow in your wake; and when Eveleen is placed upon the land, I will be your safety against the anger of her friends."

"Ha! villain!" exclaimed D'Arcy, giving a remanent to his passion, with imprudent quickness. "Ha! you think now to baffle me as you have often done. Oh! this hour pays me tenfold interest of revenge. Devils or angels shall not save you now."

With clenched teeth, every sinew hardened with the tension of iron, he struck the waves in his approach to him. The Black Peddler had complete self-possession. He was prepared for the worst; he dived as his only chance of escape. The boat passed quickly over him, and before its progress was stopped he arose twelve yards from it on the opposite side.

"Shall I fire, sir, and make sure of him?" said Lewis, presenting the long pistol which he drew from his belt.

"Lewis," said D'Arcy, in a measured, deep tone—"Lewis, if you be a son of mine, be calm. Take a steady aim; I would not exchange heaven for his escape."

"I am ready, sir," said Lewis.

"Fire, then," said D'Arcy; "he cannot escape both."

The smoke of the pistols pressed, their reports were echoing along the shore, the waters upon which the Peddler had been had nothing on their surface but foam. D'Arcy, in the vehemence of his delight, shouted aloud; but his triumph was short, for Shemus Dhu arose double the distance from them, and from the rapidly and strength with which he buffeted the waves, showed that he had not been injured in any limb.

"Hell and demons! he has escaped us," yelled D'Arcy. "Pull, Lewis, after him, with the strength of devils, or I will kill thee. See, the other boat, full of armed men, in a moment will be up to us."

"Shall I throw the wrench over—it will lighten us; and we will have one triumph of revenge?"

"Anything!" cried D'Arcy, wildly. "Kill her, sink her in the lake, quickly, and follow the cursed Peddler."

"S!" exclaimed Lewis, "the work is done for us; she is dead!"

"Villain boy!" shouted D'Arcy, seizing his son by the neck, "it was your hand did the murder. I tell thee, among mankind, I only love her and you."

The son easily freed himself from his father's grasp, and answered:

"D'Arcy, it was not I who killed her: Harrison's bullet has pierced her breast. However, we have some satisfaction, and we may throw her now into the lake as food for fishes."

D'Arcy did not interfere with the action of Lewis. He stood in the stern of the boat, vacantly gazing upon his advancing enemies. For a moment he lost his reason, and then his breast became a hell, the dwelling of a thousand demons, who chased each other through it. The moon was clouded; rain poured in torrents; the lake was still lashed into furious waves by the storm; but nature was calm and brightness, and joy, compared with the storm of D'Arcy's mind.

"Is it done?" he asked, in a fearful voice—not loud or passionate, but hoarse and firm.

"The dead weight is too heavy for me," said the boy; "give me your assistance."

"Do you, too, mock me?" said D'Arcy. "By—! an oath too dreadful to mention, I will—"

"They were the last words he ever spoke. That fearful curse upon his tongue, vengeance in his heart, without one crime repeated, of his soul was assailed by despair into the terrible presence of the Judge of the living and of the dead. A ball from O'Halloran's fowling-piece had passed through his brain. After the fire, he stood in the boat erect, he reeled, and then fell, with a loud splash, into the darkened waters, before his son, who had run to his assistance, could prevent him.

"Towards!" exclaimed Lewis, stretching forth his hand in defiance of the boat, which was a few yards distant from him, "you dare not meet him in open, manly fight—you surprised him, else you would not have so cheaply gained your victory. I am his son—I am prepared to follow him into another world, whether it be good or evil; no power can separate us—his death shall be mine. Towards I bid you defiance. May eternal pains torture you hereafter!"

With the last fearful words drove upon his lips he bounded from the gunwale of the boat, and threw himself headlong into the surge. He never was seen afterwards. D'Arcy's body was found, but of Lewis there was no trace, unless what popular story tells that his spirit, in nights of storm, is seen upon the lake in the shape of a black hound.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Almost at the same instant that Lewis had cast himself into the lake after his impious parent, the pursuing boat came alongside the other frail bark, on board which Fergus was the first to jump. At the same moment, too, the Peddler swam up, and emerged from the water; but what was their horror at finding Eveleen, to all appearance, a lifeless corpse!

During the last fifteen or twenty minutes of the fearful tragedy we have been describing—and the whole of the boat scene was not of a longer duration—poor Eveleen had lain unheeded, in this state, at the head of the boat. When dragged on board, the poor girl, exhausted with fatigue, torn and bruised by her falls among the rocks, and overcome by the long continued terror, was more dead than alive. Then, when the boat was pushed off, and all hope of safety vanished, she sunk, with one faint, unheeded shriek, into a state of utter insensibility. It was a merciful collapse of nature that rendered her insensible to the passing scene.

"O good heavens!" exclaimed Fergus, "she is dead. The light of my life is gone for ever!"

"Hold!" said Shemus Dhu, who, all but drowned as he was, had seized her arm, and with more skill than any other present possessed, felt her pulse; "she is not dead."

"Oh! joy! joy!" shouted Fergus. "Is she not dead? Are you sure she is not dead?"

The darkness of that horrible night had now passed away; the morning twilight had set in unclouded and begun the work of dispelling the clouds, which, rolled up in masses, were hastening to the west. A pale, clear, green sky gleamed in the east; the storm was hushed as if by magic; the surface of the lake began to repose from its turmoil, and the rocks and woods which surrounded it began to show a clear outline in the cold, grey light. Fergus sat in the smaller boat, which—the men in the other boat took in tow. He held the senseless form of Eveleen in his arms, with her head leaning back upon his shoulder; and Shemus Dhu applied to her lips and nostrils some spirits from a small sagon which he carried securely in his bosom, at the same time chafing her hands with his.

The pale twilight falling on her pallid features soon made the symptoms of returning life visible; and the Peddler with a "hush!" signalled Fergus to be silent.

In another minute they were at the shore, where Harrison was held a close prisoner by two stout peasants, one of them Eugene More, and where Kathleen, his intended victim, was impatiently awaiting her mistress.

"Oh! Eveleen! my mistress, Eveleen!" she exclaimed; and her well-known voice was the first sound that reached Eveleen's ear, and restored her fully to her senses.

"Where am I?" asked the poor, half-frantic girl, with eyes staring wildly. "Where am I, and what is all this?"

"Eveleen, you are safe, and in the arms of your own Fergus," said the son of Connel, fervently.

"Fergus! You here! But where is he?" said Eveleen, still staring wildly around her.

"He whom you fear, Eveleen, is not here," said Shemus Dhu, solemnly. "He is gone where the wicked go, and his vile body lies at the bottom of the lake."

"Oh, then, my heavenly Father!" said Eveleen, with uplifted eyes, and her hands clasped on her bosom—"my heavenly Father! all my hopes in Thee have not deceived me after all!"

"Now to Portarab, friends!" said the Peddler, giving the word of command; and the whole party proceeded to obey.

Fergus carried Eveleen before him on his horse which was led by a peasant, who walked at his head with a steady pace, to prevent any accident from stumbling in the rugged way. Harrison's hands were tied tightly behind his back, and Eugene More proposed that he should be compelled to walk, without much choice for his footsteps, to make him feel some of the torture which had been inflicted by him and his wicked companions on poor Eveleen and her maid. It will be easily understood that Eugene naturally felt a special impulse of anger against Harrison; Shemus Dhu permitted the punishment to be inflicted for a while, but as it would cause too much delay, he then ordered the prisoner to be mounted with the rest; and in the meantime Henry O'Halloran and a rank O'Reilly had hastened off to Killynarry, to fetch the poor wounded Hermit to join the rest at Portarab.

We cannot wait to describe the interview which followed with Connel More, or to recount the explanations which were given to him. Neither shall we attempt to describe the joy of all at the safe restoration of Eveleen—joy which, indeed, was, for a while, allayed to a great extent by fear, that her mind would not soon return to a state of healthy tranquillity; so that Connel was not permitted to bear in her presence any account of the terrible adventures of the preceding night.

As soon as the party were refreshed by a comfortable breakfast, Shemus Dhu having, in the meantime, obtained dry clothing, and Henry and O'Reilly having arrived with him whom we shall still call the Hermit, and whose joy now was overwhelming, the Peddler once more, with a tone of authority that should be obeyed, ordered Fergus, Henry, O'Reilly, and the prisoner, Harrison, to mount their horses and accompany him to Galway. The command was hard enough for Fergus, but he could not flinch; and every one of the party now felt that they could almost worship the glorious Peddler, whom they hastened to obey.

Triumphantly they entered the West Gate of Galway, and in a few minutes later they stood before the military governor; the prisoner, with his hands now untied, being placed in front.

"Captain Harrison!" said the governor, solemnly.

"General, I confess my grievous crimes," said the prisoner, in a hopeless tone.

"Let a court-martial decide the punishment," observed the general, coldly.

Shemus Dhu now explained openly to the Governor all the incidents of the night, and legal proceedings were forthwith commenced to settle the matters of right and property. But those were gloomy times for justice. Galway and its affairs were ruled by a clique of bigots of the darkest hue, who made the profession of Catholicity an excuse for the infliction of every kind of injustice in the name of law; and yet at that very time the mass of the people, and a vast number of the gentry, were Catholic but utterly cast down, humbled, and powerless. Hence it is that justice was, to a great extent, foiled in the present instance. The confession of the wretched woman, Winifred was produced and received; and the stain of murder was removed from the memory of young O'Halloran's father; but the effect of Henry having shot D'Arcy—though the villainy of the latter and the necessity of the case were admitted—was held as a sufficient ground for denying him his rights. The portion of the family patrimony, however, to which his relative the Hermit, would be entitled, was restored in such a way as to be settled at once upon his daughter, Eveleen.

The end is easily told. Eveleen and Fergus were married, and, though not wealthy, enjoyed a competency, and lived a virtuous and a happy life. Henry O'Halloran returned to France, and distinguished himself as an officer in the Irish Brigade, in which he served in Flanders, where he was killed in action. Frank O'Reilly was thoroughly reconciled to his father, married, acquired some sense, and became a very worthy member of society. Eugene More and Kathleen were also united in the holy bonds of wedlock. Captain Harrison was sentenced to be shot, but at the general's desire was only cashiered. Connel More O'Keane, or rather Dermot O'Grady, and the Hermit, spent the remainder of their days happily in Portarab, where they often received long visits from Shemus Dhu, the Black Peddler of Galway, who, however, would never fully divest himself of the mystery of his character.

The wicked are not always successful in their crimes; nor the virtuous always afflicted to the end.

THE END.

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