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*SHEA, OF THE IRISH BRIGADE*

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both of which would contain garrisons. Once beyond Lourches I might proceed at ease, save for a watchful eye after stragglers, who would cut my throat for a song. Sooth! it did not look to be so hard a task, and I closed my eyes again.

I must have slept, for the trampling of horses without, and the tone of a loud voice, giving some indistinct order, startled me to my feet. It was already dusk within, although I caught a gleam of light through the broken shutter. I grasped my jacket, hesitating, as uncertain what to do as to what had happened. There were men outside, and horses — how many I could not judge, yet surely quite a squad from the jingle of accouterments, and the restless tread of hoofs. Whoever they were they must be soldiers and enemies, and I backed slowly toward the ladder leading to the loft, scarcely venturing to breathe, and listening for every sound. There was no way out, no path of escape: I could only hope to hide in the darkness above. If they had no suspicions there would be little search. I was