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## SHAWN NA SOGGARTH; OR, THE PRIEST-HUNTER. AN IRISH TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

Shortly after the interview between Frank and Bessy, the former approached the rapparee meeting with rapid strides and gloomy brow.

"We are betrayed, boys," he muttered; "the soldiers are in our wake at this moment, and we must keep a sharp look out, every knot we run to-night."

"Yis, there's a traitor among us, an' I knew id all along," growled Fergus, fixing his fierce and vengeful gaze on Thummaush, who quivered like a sappling in the breeze; "but he'll not enjoy the reward or his treason this night,"—and seizing his trembling betrayer, who vainly invoked heaven and earth to witness the faithfulness of the charge, he pinioned his arms with a rope speedily supplied, and, by Frank's directions, placed him between two of the ablest and best armed of the rapparees, with directions to stab him to the heart, should he attempt to escape from their companionship.

Immediately succeeding this occurrence among the rapparees, a loud shout, as of pain and terror, was heard in the neighborhood of the cottage; and, moving forward cautiously to the near hedge, whence the cry proceeded, two of the dragoons discovered an armed man struggling to rise, while another was visible moving fast away. Seizing the former, who attempted no resistance, and uttered no further cry, they conveyed him to the cottage, where they perceived that he bled from a wound in the cheek, however and by whomsoever inflicted; and on questioning him as to its cause and his appearance then and there, he stated, with somewhat of reluctance, but without any apparent fear, that he was one of the rapparees who, repenting of his intended part in the night's proceedings had endeavored to steal away from his companions, as they began to move forward; but that, having been observed, he had been pursued and assaulted by a comrade, as he approached the cottage. He also stated that the rapparees were proceeding to attack the house of Mr. Dixon, the curate, which was about two miles from Ffolliot's, before they should proceed to the latter.

"Must Paddy, you're come to us comically," said Heavisides, "and you're a tellin' us quite the contrary to our instruction; and still you may be as true as steel. But if you're 'angin' /out false colors and a leadin' us a wrong route, by 'even you shall 'ave steel and lead in your stomach together."

"An' what else should I expect, barrin' that I'm not afraid in regard to spakin' the truth," said the unabashed rapparee; "an' let yer honor an' the sagers come with me at want to the island park beyant, an' quarther me after shootin' me if I don't show ye the boys marchin' to'ards the curate's."

After a moment's consultation among the dragoons in regard to this new information, it was resolved to accept the rapparee's proposal. Accordingly, leaving their cloaks and scabbards in the cottage, and having examined the priming of their pistols, they set forward for the locality designated the island park; the rapparee being placed, for security, between the two front men of the party, and the serjeant in the centre big with the idea, after having ascertained that Bessy was absent from the cottage, that she was waiting to join him.

On reaching the hedge adjoining "the park" the rapparee coughed violently twice or thrice, when the man in his rear placing his sword to his back, and he in front wheeling round and putting another to his throat, both exclaimed together, "Cough again and the steel's in your guts, villain."

"Be the laith; don't spake at all, but lain agin the hedge, an' thry what ye'll see betwix ye an' that bright star forniat the woods."

The word to rest against the hedge passed along. It was obeyed, and the troopers saw distinctly in the starlight, a considerable body of men, moving in the direction stated by the guide, and at somewhat less than a hundred yards distance.

"Let us cut the dogs down at once," said a trooper. "No, no," exclaimed Heavisides, "we'll play no such a game. Our orders is to ketch 'em in the hatter, besides that, we might o'g get ourselves into a mess, if we attacked 'em without 'alf our number. But do you, Brown, as you know these 'ere parts best, 'urry at the best of your speed to Sir Robert's and tell the men to 'asten 'instantly, and at quick trot, to Mr. Dixon's where they'll meet us."

His orders were promptly obeyed and, within about a quarter mile of the curate's his party was joined by their comrades and Brown.

But while the dragoons were thus vigilant in their pursuit of the rapparees, the latter, on whom none of their movements had been lost, leaving a few of their number to keep the pursuers still on the false scent, doubled about at a convenient opportunity, and speedily gained the vicinity of Ffolliot's Grove.

Neither Frank nor Fergus was aware that any troopers were stationed in the house; whether it was that Heavisides himself was ignorant of the fact, or had forgotten to mention it to Bessy, or that she had omitted to reveal it to Frank in the agitation of her mind: so that they approached the house, which seemed buried in sleep and silence, carelessly.

"There's the room the ould imp o' hell used to sleep in," whispered Fergus, pointing to a gable window which overlooked a thriving plantation; "an' if we could open it quietly, we might have our inds or him without alarmin' the troopers at all."

"Aye, but I know the ould scoundrel is possessed of bull-dog courage," rejoined Frank;—"and, as he's never without havin' his guns well shotted, I fear, were he to be roused, the first that entered would be certainly sent to Davy's locker."

"Pho, master Frank, sure none of us wd be afraid o' the ould hell-bird if he had twintyguns," muttered Fergus.

"But surely, master Frank, 'it's me that has the best right to lay the first hands on him," said Gorman, eagerly.

"We must be more cautious and try our soundings better first," said Frank—"who knows the bearings of the house best?"

Some ten or a dozen of the party were now standing in front of the gable, and close to a well grown sycamore; and their motions and position had been well watched and ascertained, notwithstanding the tender light of the hour, and the deep stillness that seemed to reign about the house, for, before Frank could receive an answer, through some openings prepared in the window, but which they could not perceive from abroad, half a dozen heavily loaded muskets and pistols were discharged at them, by the effects of which, Fergus was slightly wounded in the shoulder, and another of the party fell, with a shriek of agony, having received ball, in the thigh and breast.

"Back to the trees, men," shouted Frank, "and drag the body with you."

Then applying to his mouth a small whistle, concealed beneath his vest, he blew a shrill blast immediately after which three seamen, armed with pistol and cutlass, placed themselves beside him.

"Come on again, cowardly rascals; hain't ye got a warm reception? Come on again and we'll give you a hotter dose," shouted Isaac Ffolliot, in a loud, fearless, jeering tone; for, truth to tell, though Sir John had pressed strongly on him that, as the attack was intended exclusively for him, he had better remain at the castle for a day or two, he utterly—fiercely refused to be absent even for an hour from the scene of danger, notwithstanding that his brother (the proprietor of Ffolliot's Grove) chose to remain in attendance, as he stated, on his son, the cornet, who might have been reasonably expected to be the leader of the defending party, but who had been confined to bed for the last three or four days; and throughout the perilous hour of the attack, Isaac exhibited a daring and fearless courage that might have done honor to a better man.

Frank had, however, caught sight of the troopers' uniforms, during the flashing of the volley, and he exclaimed, "Sir not, boys, from your shelter; we are strongly opposed, and spare your powder (speaking to the seamen about him) till ye have something to fire at."

Some dropping shots were now exchanged, after the fashion of Indian warfare, as the dark outlines of the rapparees showed themselves now and then from behind the trees, and the flashes from within revealed, occasionally, the figures of the defenders. The effect from those was, that one of the attackers was killed and two severely wounded, while it was evident that two of the dragoons were seriously injured inside, the sound of two bodies falling heavily inside having immediately succeeded the first discharge by the rapparees.

"This is all flummery; we'll get in at the windy or lose our lives," exclaimed three of the infuriated rapparees, armed with rusty sword, pike and pitchfork, and rushing forward furiously at the same moment. But they had scarcely emerged from the trees when all three were stretched, one mortally and two seriously wounded.

A wild cry for revenge arose from the diminished band; and Frank, now greatly excited, "We are playing a bad game, boys; the party abroad must have heard the firing and will bear down on us speedily, so that something must be done at once, that is, if you think it worth while to risk more lives for the possession of an old worthless craft."

"Revenge on Ffolliot," rung wildly through the night air in reply.

"Then I will stand by you while there's a plank left; but we must change our tack and steer from this exposed position. Scatter, boys," he continued after a moment's pause; "let one division try the front of the house with myself and the boys of the Swallow; and another attend the rear, while a few must remain in their present positions to keep up the attention of the dragoons and let them be cautious too, as they know their danger now. If we succeed not in a few minutes our sail must be hoisted, as it would be madness to await the attack of the united dragoons. Let us move forward then, and three gold pieces to the first man that sets foot on the enemy's deck, unless it should be myself."

The attackers now dashed forward with another wild shout; by far the largest portion moving to the rear, and the seamen, with a few daring associates, rushing to the front. In both points, however, they were completely foiled; the doors and windows were so strongly barricaded as to resist all attempts to force them; while the defendants, having separated too, showed by some shots, though ineffectual, that they were prepared to meet the changed system of attack in all directions.

But though the attack failed on these points, its object was attained elsewhere, though, certainly not in the manner Frank had wished for, or calculated on. When the rapparees divided, Harry and Fergus, with two or three others, remained watching the gable window, where Ffolliot still continued, with a couple of aids, conscious that, if left for a moment undefended, it would prove the most dangerous point of attack.

"See, how the ould villain glories in all the blood spilt on his account to-night, beside all his other villainy," said Harry, to his companion, as a flash showed the form and features of Isaac, still at his post, and with arms in his hands;—"but, Fergus, if you'll back me, live or die, a plan shrank me, that'll give us our revenge on the spot, whatever happens after, as I'm sworn never to leave this alive 'till I have it."

"I'll back you to the last gasp," rejoined Fergus, clutching his hand.

"Thin lave the boys an' folly me; an' whin we get under the windy, as I know the ould villain's station, if you'll let me mount on yer shoulders, it'll go hard if I don't reach his heart with this," alluding to the formidable weapon he carried, namely, some nine inches of a sword blade, with point and edge exceedingly sharp, affixed to an ash handle nine feet in length.

Accordingly, moving cautiously through the trees till they reached the boundary wall to the rear, and thence creeping noiselessly, close by the gable, they reached the spot beneath the window without having attracted the observation of those within. A moment more, and Harry was mounted on the broad shoulders of his companion, by which means his hands were nearly on a level with the window; and, while he was held in his position by the powerful hands of Fergus, and with well poised aim, darting forward his terrible weapon with all his force, the blade was buried up to the hilt in Ffolliot's side, who fell with a groan, as he was in the act of presenting his piece at one of the rapparees that had emerged from a tree, to ascertain whether the figures beneath the window were friends or foes.

"Hurra!" shouted Harry, when he found his weapon had reached his hated oppressor. But the shout proved his destruction; for, as he sprang from Fergus' shoulders, the dragoon that still remained at the window, turning the muzzle of his pistol downwards, drove a brace of bullets through his neck and shoulders. He staggered forwards a few paces and fell noiselessly, but as lifeless as his victim.

"This is the devil's own night's work intirely," muttered Fergus, as he bore the body back by the same route by which they had approached the window.

### CHAPTER XIX.

The parties in front and rear of the house had, as we before said, been utterly foiled; and the report of a few shots in the distance now announced that the party of dragoons abroad, having become aware of their position, and summoned by the firing, were approaching.

"This has been an unfortunate night's business, and one I little reckoned on," said Frank; "and the sooner we spread our canvas now the more useless risk we shall avoid, as the dragoons will reach us speedily, I know from the direction of their shots."

"Let us have a parting whack at the ould villain, Captain Jewel, after all he's cost us, if 'twas only for poor Ned's sake," eagerly exclaimed a rapparee, whose brother had been severely wounded in the attack.

"Ffolliot is done for any bow," said Fergus, who had just joined the party in front. "After all the loss the ould villain cost us, poor Harry Gorman put his blade through him, though he

lost his own life by it. God help unfortunate Sally when to-morrow comes."

"Then," said Frank, earnestly, "we have neither time nor business to remain an instant longer—hark to that." The report of a pistol was heard sharply in the direction of the hall, so to prove that the drawer of the trigger was at no inconsiderable distance from them.

Frank now again applied the whistle to his mouth, and moving with his companions to the rear, as well to unite there, as because it afforded the most sheltered way of retreat, he said in a low but earnest tone, "Now, boys, let us scatter instantly, and I wish heartily we had not come at all to-night, as, from the direction the party is coming in, to avoid them, we must pass within range of the arms from the gable again, and the more sail we carry the better."

"We'll give them light to know their friends by, any how, by the 'tarnal, if the devil was at the back door," swore the rapparee that had before spoken.

Entreaty to him to desist, and not further endanger the lives of himself and others, was vain. He clambered over a wall, with the position of which he seemed to be acquainted; and, with the desperate man, it was the work of but a few minutes to fly across an adjoining field—overcome the slight fastening of a cotten's cabin—snatch a half-burned coal from the hearth before the terrified occupants could recover breath to accost him—retrace his path—with a powerful effort burst open the door of an outhouse, used as a wool store, and, blowing the coal for an instant, lay it on the heaped wool. The inflammable material instantly ignited; the fire spread smoulderingly for a moment—then the flames rose—burst through the door and fastened on the board windows, which were instantly in a blaze. There chanced, too, to be adjoining the wool store a pile of laths and boards intended for some addition to the rear of the house; and, the fire communicating with these a rushing and roaring flame rose at once, with a burst of terrific grandeur, into the night air, contrasting fearfully with the tender light of the summer heaven all round.

"Hurra!" wildly exclaimed the rapparee, as he gazed on his work for a moment, previous to following his retreating comrades.

There had been but a few random shots, as was before observed, in the front or rear of Ffolliot's Grove, as the defenders would not venture to expose their persons, by placing themselves in a position to fire effectually at those beneath, and they were too few in number to venture sallying out on their attackers. But when the figures of the retreating rapparees were discovered, by the flame light moving through the plantation, which they should necessarily pass in order to avoid the approaching dragoons, a volley was fired at them by all the efficient defenders. The consequence of this discharge was that Frank was grazed in the arm and Thummaush Beg (who had been strictly watched through all the danger and turmoil of the hour, and preserved, more than once, by Frank, from meeting his death from three or four of the party when they saw their companions falling) received a wound in the leg, though their positions were quite different, as Frank and the seamen were entirely in the rear, while Thummaush was considerably in advance in front.

"Lave the treacherous villain to his friends," said Fergus, shoving him with his foot, as Thummaush sank down unable, or affecting to be unable, to move on; "and if they mistake him for a thure man and give him the steel, it'll be just payment for him."

"What?" said Frank, moving up rapidly, "if he be what you suspect, do you want to have the enemy piloted into every secret creek and haven of yours, before you would have time to trim a sail? Besides, as yet we have no positive proof of his treachery, and we should recollect that he must feel pain as acutely as any of us. Tow him on then, as smoothly as you can, till we can get a secure anchorage for him."

He was helped forward accordingly, though not quite as gently as Frank seemed to expect, and at a pace anything but consolatory to his wound, whether slight or serious.

The attackers had but cleared the plantation a few minutes before the dragoons came up, with Heavisides puffing like the chimney of a steam engine. The horsemen, however, delayed a few minutes more, to aid their comrades, who now ventured forth, in quenching the flames which had, as yet, only commenced an assault on the rear door and windows of the mansion itself; and when they all, after having mastered the fire, proceeded to the pursuit, there was no vestige of the rapparees to be seen in the plantation or adjoining grounds, though they had waited, it was evident, to bear off the fallen bodies with them, as there was no trace of these, except that the sword was slippery in places with their blood.

"I know it, blast my eyes," said Heavisides, after a brief consultation; "the rascals are a going to plunder the cottage, as they du'sn't

venture to attack Sir Robert's or the curate's. But we'll be at the dog's heels. 'Ere, Jones, take 'alf the party round by the weir; myself and 'otter 'alf 'll go by the 'orse park, wot we came by."

Now, though the serjeant-major affected to think the rapparees such fools, as to venture to the cottage, after their discomfiture at Ffolliot's Grove, he had no such thought. But he wished to make certain of one small portion of the night's arrangements, namely, the carrying off Bessy with him; for he was either too little of a prudential calculator, or had too much confidence in his usual good fortune, to have any misgivings, that his allowing himself to be so easily duped and misled, and the consequent destruction of Isaac Ffolliot and the wounding of his two comrades, would debar Sir John and his captain, from interfering with her after the flight should have been ascertained.

The parties separated, and he shall accompany the serjeant. In fact, the other division closely imitated the celebrated progress of

"The King of France, with twenty thousand men," namely, in doing nothing; for they found nothing to do; reaching the cottage, after having, with some difficulty, in consequence of the faint light, crossed the weir, without seeing or hearing anything of the retreating rapparees, who had betaken themselves to the fastnesses of the Partridge mountains—a direction nearly at right angles with their route.

When the party returned to the cottage, Aaron Andrews, who was in a state of great excitement, instantly flying at the troop-serjeant-major, who was the first to enter, seized him by collar, exclaiming, in a tone hoarse with passion, "So, Mr. Serjeant, you've daunted to tak' awa' a loyal Protestant's daughter. But reform her again till her father, or—"

"W'y, Aaron Andrews, where is your daughter, man?" interrupted Heavisides impatiently.

"Come, come, nibor, that cock won't fight.—We've proof that you prevailed on the foolish lassie to fit w' you; and gin she's no restored afore sunrise, safe and unharmed, by the God of my fathers, Sir John or Captain Aylmer shall see me righted—aye, even till your destruction, or the higher powers shall hearken till it."

"Who 'eard myself and Bessy Andrews this evening?"

"Our honest maiden, Hetty Matthews, who remained close till you during all the planning."

"Then, I'll be d—d, but she's betrayed and hounded us both; let me see her howsome-dever."

"The maid was not to be found; but her comrade male-servant came in breathlessly, to state that a party of men were passing along the hedge on the summit of the ould mill park, about a furlong to the rear of the boundary."

"Then there's the villain rapparees, as sure as my name's Bill, and they're bearing off my darling Bessy with 'em. But we'll put a 'alt to their gallop, and rescue the rosebud still. Come boys, one more start, and we shall have the reward still, I know."

"The fire-arms having been re-examined, the party set forward again on their wild goose chase; the serjeant leading them, at a pace neither to be expected from his competency nor previous fatigues.

"I dianna get credit at all till the serjeant's innocence," said Aaron, looking after him, "for all that, he acts no' like a man playing out a desasteful play. But whatever ejected Bessy Andrews fra her father's house, gin capled she by, shall pay dearly for it, gin there's law to be had in Ireland—aye, or in England 'tiber, by God that created me."

"D—n my eyes," said a dragoon, after the party had proceeded a couple of hundred yards from the cottage, "if there ant a wench any 'ow, passing along the hedge. I see her cloak and cap between me and the stars."

"And so there is, surely; and it's no one but my bangel, Bessy;—double quick boys," exclaimed Heavisides, panting and pushing on at an increased pace, as he perceived distinctly a female form moving by the hedge, in a line between him and the evening star, that was filling with her beautiful light, a portion of even the summer night air.

"The serjeant's fey the night, I see thinkin', w' his scouring and galloping in a' directions, after a bit lassie," observed Saddy.

The object of this observation kept still in advance of the party, most of whom loudly expressed their enjoyment at his panting exertions. Yet the figure he was pursuing continued ahead of him. Once or twice, indeed, he evidently closed fast upon it, though it shot away from him again; and a third time he was so near that, reaching out his hand to grasp its garments, he panted in a beseeching tone, "Bessy—my—my bangel—we're far enough now—and—and there's no one near—but your own true-hearted 'eavisides—so 'alt—'alt my bangel—till I come lup to you."