

THE CHRISTMAS BELLS.

From proud palace domes, From gay castle homes, And ivy'd towers in lonely dells, Once more the glad sound Is echoed around Of the merry, merry old Christmas Bells.

And the wind's soft gale, To the distant vale, Faint as music in ocean shells, Wafts the sweet tone To the hamlets lone Of the dear, merry Christmas Bells.

And the poor now wait At the old Hall gate, Where the squire of the village dwells, Who always takes care His good gifts to share At the sound of the Christmas Bells.

And the youthful bound The kissing bought round, Transported by its secret spells, While the aged look From the chimney nook, As sweetly ring the Christmas Bells.

Yet, ah! mid the mirth Of many a hearth Deep sorrow a tale of woe tells, And reminds us there Is a vacant chair Since last we heard the Christmas Bells.

And the tear unhid Droops the bright eye's lid, While the heart with silent grief swells, As we think of those In the grave's repose, Who loved to hear the Christmas Bells.

But we must not weep, For although they sleep In the tombs quiet cells, Their spirits roam In a happy home Far, far away from the Christmas Bells.

Then oh! let us pray When death calls away, And those bells toll our parting knells, May we all above Meet the friends we love Mid sweeter sounds than Christmas bells.

SHEMUS DHU,

THE BLACK PEDLAR OF GALWAY.

A TALE OF THE PENAL TIMES.

CHAPTER XV—(CONTINUED)

"By heaven! I speak truth," said D'Arcy. "Your daughter lives, and is now at my mercy." "No! no matter what I suffer, the father of the orphan will protect my child. Henry O'Halloran may still return. The property must and shall be his."

"Pshaw! answered D'Arcy. The sound of the word made the hermit tremble. It was uttered with the coldness of a spirit of evil. "Lambert, you are experienced enough to know the difficulties in his way. He and your daughter also, I understand, are of a sect, which, thank our happy days, cannot inherit without penalties. Besides, he is branded with illegitimacy. There is no city registry of his mother's marriage."

"You and I were deceived in that; there is a registry—and witnesses." "Do you say so?" said D'Arcy, eagerly. Where is it to be found?" "With Father Thomas, who has preserved it. Do you imagine the priest will be believed? No; the principles of his religion are too notorious for its priest to be credited. Is your resolution fixed?"

"It is," said the hermit, in despair. "Farewell," said D'Arcy, rising and taking his pistols. "When you next see me you will behold the murderer of your daughter and of your nephew, O'Halloran. He, too, is in my power, for he has returned."

"Stop remorseless man!" cried the hermit. "Take the papers. Cursed be the cause which put them in my power! Swear to me no attempt will be made against their lives. But why do I ask you to swear who believe not the sanctity of an oath. Prove to me that my child lives, and enjoy the fruits of your villainy whilst you can."

"This is kind of you, O'Halloran. I am glad you have returned to reason," said the hardened man. "You want proofs. The old woman, Winifred Haughton, with whom you are better acquainted than I, has proved to me that she lives—and as the reputed daughter of another."

"You do not satisfy me," said the hermit. "The wretch whose name you mention is not worthy of belief. With whom does my daughter live? Have you seen her? Have you spoken to her?"

"I have spoken to her, though I did not know her then to be your daughter. By—O'Halloran, she is a beautiful girl. A thought strikes me at this moment of being able to settle all differences between us. You know I am unmarried."

"Ha!" exclaimed the hermit, "you would presume! Marry my daughter to this perjured man!"

"Well, I have only wished it through friendship. I am no bad match, I can tell you. But power before love is my motto. I am in no hurry to put on the fetters of matrimony, however light they may be. When I wish it, believe me the will of no father shall hinder me."

"Have you come hither to mock me, O'Grady?" said the hermit, in a voice that would have awed any other. "In my insolence of successful villainy to trample more upon the bruised victim of your ambition? Begone hence, and leave me again to peace!"

"You would hear where your daughter lives at present?" said D'Arcy. "The papers, Lambert! That is well done. Your daughter is in the house of my trustworthy uncle, Connel More O'Keane, or Dermot O'Grady, whom heaven grant me power to injure! The papers, man! I have no time for tragedy."

"Eveleen O'Keane, my daughter! Eveleen O'Keane! It must be so!" cried the old man. "So kind, so gentle! I have spoken to her, and I know not that she was my daughter. It must be she. My heart always yearned for her love. Oh! it was nature which pointed her out as my child. O'Grady, I believe you. I give you up the papers of our right. But you must swear to me, though I believe you capable of the blackest crimes—you must swear to me on these sacred books, that the young man, Henry O'Halloran, shall not be injured."

"I will swear in any form you please, so that he does not thwart my views," said he, with whom the religion of an oath was nothing. The hermit produced the papers from a drawer, and handed them to D'Arcy.

"Farewell, O'Halloran," said the latter. "The Frenches are not far from this. I will tax them tonight for a better lodging than yours." "Remember your oath," said the hermit. "Assuredly, I shall remember its condition," replied D'Arcy.

The hermit lighted him to the outer room in

silence, where O'Reilly yet appeared to be deep in sleep. He was awakened with difficulty, and seemed displeased at being disturbed. He was obliged, however, to arise; and after thanking the hermit for his kindness, he silently followed D'Arcy on his way to Moycullen House, the residence of the Frenches.

CHAPTER XVI

When the time came for Fergus's departure, he was not long preparing his little necessaries for the journey. He selected his best articles of dress, and putting some clean linen into a little bundle, he descended the step-ladder with an anxious heart. His companion, who had no preparations to make, awaited him in the yard of the outhouses.

"Have you got arms?" asked O'Reilly. "Yes; I have taken the young stranger's pistols. Do you think it was necessary?"

"Why, I cannot say; but it is better to be prepared. We have to deal with a cunning foe. But you say this O'Halloran—isn't that the name which you call him?—is a stranger among you?"

"Did I say so?" said Fergus, with hesitation. "Oh, yes!" replied his companion. "It matters not; I am not over-curious to know his secrets, though, confound them! They might as well let me know all as I know a part. It would make a man more in earnest if people had confidence in him. However, he did tell me that he came to this country to regain his father's property, and he makes us the means, I suppose. We should be obliged."

"My good friend," replied Fergus, "if there be any more secrets than we know of, be assured they are kept from us for good reasons. He is a stranger among us; let not the consideration, hinder us from performing faithfully what we have promised."

"My dear fellow, fear not my blushing. I have pledged my word, and, wicked as I may have been, never could accuse me with its breach. Lead on, Fergus; I will stand faithfully by you in every danger."

O'Keane obeyed his companion, yet he could not help once or twice looking back on the home of his youth, with sad misgivings of ever seeing it again. With these gloomy thoughts in his mind, he turned from the main road of the village into a path which was the shortest to Moycullen, where he was to expect his guide. He had gone a few steps into the wood when he heard a voice calling after him, "Fergus, avourneen!" It was the voice of his old nurse.

"Have I forgotten anything, Judith?" he inquired. "No, avourneen, no," said the old woman, "but I want to say a word to you, avic, before you go. I know the old people often think that the young ones have money enough. I brought you my little scrippings for the last few years. You may want them. You are going to a strange place, where you have few friends. You must take this, mached; you won't refuse your poor old nurse. May God bless you, and His Mother! Go to Molly Lardner's she keeps a public-house in the Quay-street—I suppose any one will show you Molly's for I hear she does well now. Tell her that you are my foster son, and I will engage she will treat you well, for my sake. Be sparing of your money, enough, a-lavin, for in isn't every day we can get it."

"My dear nurse," said Fergus, "I have no use for the money. I have more than sufficient for my expense."

"No, avic," said the old nurse; "it would break the heart in me if you didn't take it. You can buy me—that is, if you can spare it—a nice blue riband for my cap on Sundays. God bless you, my son! God bless you!" and she gave a parting kiss to her foster-child.

"My good old mother, have you nothing to say to me?" said Frank O'Reilly, who had overheard the conversation.

"God and His Saints protect you, sir, and send you safe."

"Well that is an affectionate old creature," said O'Reilly, after Judith had departed. "By Jove! if I can come lawfully by the means, I will send her some present myself. I shall never forget her judgment in my favour against D'Arcy."

The young men had nothing now to hinder their advance. The night was bright enough to show them the path through the rocks and trees. Even had it been darker, Fergus had too often passed the ground between Portar and Moycullen to be deceived about it. O'Reilly indulged his own train of thought, and left his companion to think over his situation, the result of the circumstances of the preceding days. At first, thoughts melancholy and full of gloom came across his soul. "And Eveleen is not my sister!" he said, inwardly; "and I no longer can call her by that dear name! Oh, why has my father deceived us? Why did he not tell me this years back, when I knew and felt less her merit and her merit for me? Eveleen shall now move in a higher sphere than mine, and shall be estranged from me. Ah, no! she will yet love me as a brother; and I am ungenerous not to wish for that which will please her. She shall no longer be looked down upon by the proud and selfish; she shall now have rank equal to their own. Yes, Eveleen, I will sacrifice my feelings to yours. I rejoice now that you are not my sister."

Fergus felt the reward of the generous feeling in the calm pleasure which it gave. Melancholy did no longer prey upon his mind, and with a buoyant spirit he thought upon his visit to the city. Sometimes the dangers of the adventure occurred to him; but he entered on it by the command of his father. He should succeed, and it might serve Eveleen and his father; and they would know it, and be thankful. And then he recollected the words of his father, "that he would be an honour to his family, and that better days were in store for him." And he could not help deducing from such an undefined promise, that some mystery existed concerning his own rank, and that still he might not be deprived of the society of Eveleen; and he again felt the comfort of hope. Happy, blessed days of the young! when the roughest realities of life yield to the pleasures of hope! The youth bounded over the shaking bog, and bid his companion follow with a quicker step.

The young men soon arrived at the cabin where they were told their guide would meet them. They perceived a man's figure on the road which led through the bog to Moycullen House, which they found to be the person they expected. After recognition, Fergus said:

"It is a fine night for the journey, Murrough. Have we kept you long in waiting?"

"Not long, Mr. Fergus; yet I would not that it were longer. It is not over-pleasant to watch for travellers in the neighbourhood of Kiltray. You have everything prepared? Is this man to be a fellow-traveller?"

The last question was asked out of the hearing of O'Reilly.

Fergus satisfied him with a whisper, and then said, aloud: "We are prepared; come on."

"Come on, then, in God's name," said the guide. "It is an hour after nightfall, and we have need to walk quickly, lest the west gate be shut for the night against us."

Their guide appeared an active and powerful man. He held an oak stick in his hand; and though encumbered with a heavy great coat, he strided on at a rapid rate. Fergus, with the spirit of a young hound, for the first time unslipped on its quarry, kept up with him; and Frank O'Reilly was too accustomed to pedestrian exercise to remain in the rear. The latter endeavoured to draw the guide into conversation but this had the effect only of making him button

the collar of his great coat tighter, and drawing his cap closer over his brows. O'Reilly's questions were answered by monosyllables, or by the words, "I don't know, sir; it may be so. He did not, however, remark the guide's reserve, or if he did, he thought on it only for the moment, believing the fellow to be ignorant or churlish. Their quick pace brought them in an hour within a mile of the city. At the suggestion of their guide (in whom Fergus seemed to place a full confidence, though contrary to the hints of his companion, they struck from the high-road into a by-path that led over a rising ground, commanding a view of the town. Murrough, as Fergus called the guide, gave it as his reason for the change of route, that the lower road was more frequented, being a thoroughfare between Kienlough Castle and the town. The travellers, with mutual consent, rested on the hill to admire the scenery about them. The less poetical feelings of his companions, at that moment, sympathized Fergus's admiration of the scene. The moon had just arisen, giving a ghostly hue to every object by its light. It was thus that it seemed to Fergus. He was again heavy at heart; and when he looked to the dark waters of the Corrib, glistening under the pale moonbeam, he thought of his home, and wished to be there again. His melancholy fancy tinged with its influence every feature of the scenery. The closely crowded roofs of the city, appearing to form but one, struck him as a vast monument of the dead, and the high spire of the church as its crowning point. The stillness around harmonized with the idea. Not a sound was in the air, not a sign of life about him. He strove to wrest his soul from these thoughts, for his sentiments were not naturally morbid—but in vain. However, the scene was new to him, and beautiful, and gazed upon it with an interest not less intense, because saddened with the recollections of home. The broad river from the lake glided solemnly between banks covered to the edges with ash and beech. The grey castellated residence of the baronets of Menlough, straddled in wood, arose opposite from the water's brink. The river lower down, chafed by the ruins of the castle of the ancestors of the Clanrickards, whose lofty chimneys and broken battlements, seen clearly over the wood, manifested that the power and magnificence of the De Burgh were once great in this district. Fergus had full time to admire the beautiful scenery. O'Reilly after saying that it was "a delightful night," took advantage of the halt to light his pipe, and sending himself quietly on a stone, enjoyed the luxury of his smoke; whilst the guide, leaning motionless upon his stick, appeared without feeling—at least, indifferent to everything about him. Fergus felt his spirits becoming lighter by degrees, and now he was glad that he was about to mingle in scenes and with people of whom he had read. Some of the features of the scene which elicited the admiration of Fergus, are now changed Parks are enclosed; cottages or larger dwellings are built on the haunts of the deer; and agriculture has dispossessed the leafy inhabitants of the soil. Yet enough of the natural beauty remains to court the view of lovers of the picturesque, or employ the pencil of the sketcher.

Fergus gazed his full on scenes that were so new to him, and of which he had often heard and read. His heart, at last, bounded with the pleasure of seeing the city of his birth. "Oh, that Eveleen were here!" he exclaimed, aloud, not noticing the presence of his companions.

"Better that she is where she is," muttered Murrough. "Let's move on." The words stopped Fergus's flight of fancy, and he thought again unromantically like his companions. They descended the hill quickly, and a few minutes' walk brought them to the western suburb of Galway. Here the road divided. That to the left, and the shorter one, passing by a military cantonment (near whose site now stands a large convent of the Presentation order of nuns), led in a straight line to the West Gate. This Murrough avoided; for the breach of discipline, too often overlooked by their officers, allowed the military of the time a licence to go outside their barracks bounds, which in nowise made the neighbourhood safe for travellers. On this account, the environs of the barracks of the soldiery, both within and without the gates, were avoided after fall of evening, particularly by females. And in many instances, respectable men, of the middling class, for defence of themselves or of their friends against the soldiers' outrages, incurred the punishment of a sleepless night in a dark flagged room, and in the morning (according to the humor of the magistrate or the discretion of the prisoner to the religion, and of consequence, as it was said, to the government of the state) the penalty of a fine, or imprisonment, for daring to interfere with his majesty's royal servants. These considerations induced the guide, as he explained to take the more circuitous road away from the barrack, leading by the Claddagh, or fishermen's town, to the West Bridge.

They had passed some scattered huts without meeting any person, and entered upon the ground now occupied by Don-in-ick street, lately the most fashionable part of Galway. The eyes of the travellers rested on the long row of thatched cabins which bounded the road on the right. There were some houses amongst them with more pretensions to respectability, in their wider fronts and whitened walls, either the dwellings of richer proprietors, or houses of entertainment for "man and beast," then as well as now, not uncommon in the suburbs of Galway. The opposite side of the road or street appeared a waste of marshy ground and water, with here and there a giant forest tree, with shattered boughs and leafless branches, grieving for the fall of its companions. Yet, improvement was commencing in this insular district. Parts of the ground were being reclaimed; grazing paddocks were enclosed; and the foundations of raised walls of new buildings, promising extent and durability, superior to those of any which had yet made their appearance on this side of the river, showed that some of the wealthier citizens were taking advantage of a situation which afterwards became so beneficial to the trade of the town, affording a facility for the working of every sort of machinery.

Fergus looked around him, and thought whilst passing through the cabins, that such misery and desolation should not lead to the very gates of a principal city.

Reader do you recollect your first approach, in youth, to a city which you had long desired to see? If you do, you must recollect that you have felt every thought that brought care with it, lest in the excitement of your emotion. The pulse beat quicker, and then quicker. You must have been young and inexperienced to feel it; the young blood ran faster from the heart; the heart itself, queen of feeling, heaved, and was still; and then throbbed, and throbbed again, and quicker. It was thus with Fergus. He stood upon the West Bridge which separated the island suburb from the city. The water roared in a maddening sweep beneath him—yet he heard it not. He was within a step, for the first time for years, of the city of his birth. Every other thought deserted him. He would have indulged a joyful reverie, had not Murrough's voice aroused him.

"By St. Columb" said the guide, "the gates are closed! We must depend now on our wit for an entrance. Heaven grant we pass without examination! Conceal your arms young men; it is more difficult now to pass these soldier-dogs' scrutiny than a few weeks back, before Shemus Dhu was taken."

"Friend, there is no necessity for concealment," said O'Reilly. "I am a respectable citizen of the town. I shall give my name, and no soldier will dare to question my companions."

"The Lord assist your wit, sir, for it wants helping!" said Murrough, in a plying tone. "The mention of your name would make us fare the worse."

"My name, fellow? Do you know of whom you speak?"

"I do, I believe," answered Murrough, calmly. "Please your honour, you are one Mr. Frank O'Reilly, once the friend and companion of Mr. Ragnald D'Arcy, and now leagued with his enemies, against him and the 'worshipful council' of this ancient city."

"Who dares to this?" said O'Reilly, in passion. "I will this moment enter the town, and confound these falsehoods."

"By St. Nicholas, you shall not, whilst I have an arm to prevent you!" cried the guide, rushing before O'Reilly, and seizing both his arms with the grasp of a giant.

"Desist, villain, or I will alarm the guard!" said O'Reilly, struggling in vain to free himself from the guide.

"Ah, yes, and give me and the young man, whom you swore to defend at every hazard, to the gallows Fine honour this!" The words had a sudden effect upon O'Reilly. He thought on Fergus and his mission, and found that he was acting against the confidence reposed in him.

"Do as you wish," said the hot-headed young man, with the suddenness which marked all his changes of temper and resolution. "I will be guided by you some time longer; but, by Jove! I will bring D'Arcy to an account before I sleep."

"Well, you see there is sense in listening quietly to a friend's advice," said Murrough, unloosing his hold from O'Reilly's arms. "How you of gentle blood chafe and storm and foam at the lowest word against what you call your honour, who, without remorse, would plunge your swords in base blood like mine! Thank our nature, we of the peasant race are not made of such polite stuff! Follow now, young men; but if you set any price upon your lives, not a word from you without my command."

"Hallo, sentry, within!" said the guide, aloud, approaching the iron-studded gates.

"Who comes?" said a gruff voice accompanied by the clatter of his musket along the pavement of the gateway.

"Friends, on the mayor's service," Murrough answered; and took the best position for hearing what passed within, knowing that there was more than one sentry in the archway.

"Admit him, Tom," said another voice.

"I say no," said the first soldier.

"Bill, these Irish are a cunning folk. I have heard more voices than one just now. We must be watchful and wary, you understand. And, afore George! if these fellows come in the king's name, or their mayors, which they hold they same, it is rightly that they pay toll to the king's watchful soldiers. Ha! old fellow, this pleasesh you?"

"Approach it, Tom, but not roundly, see you; it may be matter for a black-hole affair, or something worse. Approach it though, boy!"

"You on the mayor's service, the sign, and you pass," said the first speaker to the travellers.

"We know not the word," said Murrough, who had overheard the conversation of the soldiers, and was resolved to frame his answers according to their wishes. "We are citizens on a peaceful errand. If you admit us, you can have proof of it."

"How many may you be?" asked the sentry.

"Three in all," was the reply.

"What proof will you give that you are his majesty's loyal subjects, and that you are friends of his majesty's faithful soldiers?"

"No proof with wood and iron between us. Admit us, and you shall see we are not empty-handed."

"What say you, Bill?" asked the soldier, speaking in a low voice to his companion.

"It looks fairly, Tom. I say by all means admit them—cautiously though, by ones. Do you hear?"

"I do, old caution, but I head not. I fear me they are not safe ones for admittance. Ha! there are high words between them already."

"The gentlemen are only impatient to get home, Tom. What evil is it to take a drink from them on a sharp night like this? Methinks, Tom, the lectures of the Puritan will neither benefit your soul nor body."

"But they will keep me, old grumbler, from the black-hole and the lash. I will even tell these friends they must sleep without the wall for this night."

"Well, I see," said the disappointed veteran "there is no use arguing with a wilful one." And he shouldered his arms, and hummed a tune, to show his indifference to the result of his comrade's parley.

During his conversation with the sentinel, Murrough feared an interruption to his plans from the impatience of O'Reilly. The latter had borne, with evident ill-humour, the delay of the question and answer between the guide and the sentinel. He had been accustomed to pass out and in of the gates, at the latest hours, without a challenge. The liberty allowed to his station and principles, established, he believed, a prescriptive right of entrance; and to question it at a time when he most desired despatch, excited his impatience to the highest degree. The consideration of his companion's circumstances alone restrained him during the former colloquy; but when the silence, after the last words of the guide, was longer than expected, he called to the soldier; in a commanding tone, to unshoot the bolts, or stand responsible for the delay of gentlemen on business of importance.

"The night air has roused your spirits, my masters," replied the soldier; "we shall see, by and by, if you be gentle folk, and on business of importance. The officer will take his rounds within an hour, I should think. In the meantime, you would do well to cool your temper on the bridge with the fresh air from the sea."

"Scoundrel!" O'Reilly roared, "if you don't unbar the gate instantly, I will report you to your colonel."

"Afore George! it's a good one," said the soldier. "What spirit these chicks take where there is danger! My master, if I judge from your words, you are safer lodged without the walls than within them. Fare thee well, till the captain comes. Its cold exercise talking when a man is not in blood for it. Ha! ha!" And he laughed in concert with the heavy tread of his steeled boot along his walk.

"In my mind the soldier gives good advice without pay," said Murrough, with a composure which Fergus did not expect. "Ah, Mr. Frank, if you wish to thrive in this world, you must sometimes keep a curb on your temper. 'Tis a fool's part to preach now; but I pray my patron that your warm temper play us no more pranks while we are together. It would not be safe, at this moment, to enter those gates. These soldiers are another sort of your honorable men, who do not easily forget an insult offered to their dignity. Scoundrel! It is a ticklish word to a king's man. Well, we will see what's to be done. Clouds are gathering on the moon. The tide is yet on the flow, and old Columb, the fisherman, if we ask his aid for his namesake's love will give us a cast-over in safety."

Frank O'Reilly did not answer. He followed the guide doggedly; in the fancy of his power, to make those suffering in the morning who had thwarted his inclinations. It is some assuagement in his disappointment, or in his suffering, or in his misery, to man, to fancy that in himself there is a resource against the power of those who oppose or oppress him. The thought pleases his self-love or pride, and begets a confidence which destroys, in a great part, his feelings of fear, and his sense of danger. O'Reilly felt this; and when he stood again upon the rude bridge which divided the Claddagh from the street of cabins, his heart beats

lighter with the hope of defeating D'Arcy's machinations.

Murrough led them through two or more close lanes of low, thatched cabins, and thence to the strand, where he bade them wait the success of his intercession with the fisherman.

Columb was easily induced to assist friends. He came forth from the nearest hut with his son, both habited in the wide trousers of canvas, long blue jacket, and pike-ol cap of their calling. A little boat was quickly unmoored, and as quickly driven into the middle stream by the stout arms of the rowers. They were obliged to keep high against the current, which ran strongly from the West Bridge, in order to make the landing at the inner fortifications of the town. The moon, densely clouded, was favorable to their concealment, and the walls along the river, though fast suffering decay, afforded screen enough from the observation of any chance patrol of the garrison. Fergus was the first to leap upon the steps which led to the fishermen's quays, and the first to feel the joy of their safe passage. He thanked the fisherman kindly, and slipped into his hand a silver piece.

"You must take your money I, k, my master," said the honest boatman. "I have given you the cast-over for kindness. It is not our custom to charge friends."

"Well, my good man," Fergus replied, "I hope yet to be able to pay you in your own way."

"I don't doubt your will, sir," replied the boatman—"I don't doubt it. That face belongs to a kind heart. Good night, my friends, and St. Columb speed you on your journey!" The little boat again was in the current, contending with its surly waves.

(TO BE CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT.)

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WILLIAM DOW & CO. BREWERS & MALTSTERS

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