

A VICTIM TO THE SEAL OF CONFESSION.

A TRUE STORY. By REV. JOSEPH SPILLMAN, S.J.

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CHAPTER IV.

Loser reached the "Four Ways" inn soon after the children, and stood by while Charles, with frequent interruptions on Julia's part, gave his friend the baker the reasons why his grandmother was remaining for the night in the convent, whilst he and his sister were to return to Aix. The account he gave was not very clear, and at the story of the ghost the stout baker shook his head incredulously. One thing however was evident; the children were afraid of spending the night in the deserted convent, and therefore wanted to return home; but why their grandmother should not go with them remained a mystery.

"Why," Charles said, "Uncle has a whole lot of money in his desk—"

"You know we were to say nothing about that," interposed Julia sharply.

"Why not?" her brother retorted.

"Mr. Lenoir is not a thief."

"That I certainly am not," the baker interrupted. "But make haste and jump up, it is already late. You shall sit one on each side of me in the front seat and we shall see how fast my good horse can run. Yes, I understand now why your grandmother sends you off alone. Yet this very morning she was saying her son, your Reverend Uncle—never mind, it is no business of mine. Can I do any thing for you, Sir?"

These later words were addressed to Loser, who had been near enough to overhear the main part of the conversation, and now stepped up to the cart just as the horse was in the act of starting, and asked if he could be driven to Aix for a trifling compensation?

"How came you by that seal all across your face?" inquired the baker, who did not much like the look of the man.

"I have to thank an accursed Prussian Hussar for that, in the course of the late war," was the answer.

"Up with you then, Sir, you must sit here by me and tell me the whole story. Make room for the gentleman, Charles, all honor to the brave defenders of our country."

So Loser seated himself in the place Mrs. Montmoulin had occupied a few hours previously, and romanced so freely about the exploits he had achieved in the Franco-German war, that he positively fascinated the worthy baker. In fact Mr. Lenoir went a good distance out of his way to set the hero of many battles down at the station, and far from taking anything from him, he treated him to a glass of Bordeaux at the buffet, and shook hands heartily with him on parting. As he left the station he heard Loser asking at the booking office for a ticket to Marseilles, and being informed that the train did not go for another hour. A few minutes later Lenoir put the children down at their mother's door, and went home quite elated to repeat to his wife the wonderful deeds of the brave veteran with the scar of the sabre-cut.

Meanwhile Loser provided himself at the station with a flask of brandy and some sandwiches which he put into his pocket, and then pacing about the waiting room, he made himself as conspicuous as possible, asking one railway official after another about his ticket and the time of the train, until one of the porters told him that if he could not wait like other people, he had better have a special train put on for him. Loser laughed and said if he could have it at the expense of the company he would only be too glad, as he was in a hurry to get to Marseilles. At length the train was signalled, and as it came into the station, Loser, together with a crowd of other passengers, pressed forward to find a place. The train was very full, and hearing the porters call out "plenty of room behind," he hastened to the lower part of the platform, less brilliantly lighted than the upper. Room in here, he quick, there is no time to lose," said the guard, opening the door of one of the last compartments, observing as he did so, the ugly scar on the face of the passenger, whose ticket he at the same time clipped. Almost immediately the whistled sounded, and the engine began to move. Before his fellow-passengers had settled themselves in their places Loser contrived to slip out of the carriage, and make his way out of the station unobserved before the com-

motion caused by the outgoing train had subsided.

"There," he said to himself as he emerged into the darkness, "all has turned out just as I wished! Now if any body should assert that I was in Ste. Victoire to-night, I could bring forward a couple of witnesses to prove that I left Marseilles by the last train. Certainly neither guard nor porters will remember having seen me on the way, but when a train is full one man is not noticed. At all events I shall escape suspicion at first and that will give me time to get off with the money. What I have to do now is to get back to Ste. Victoire without being seen. Nine o'clock," he mused after a glance at the illuminated face of the station clock; "I can easily get into the convent before midnight, and long before daybreak and make off with my booty." So saying he turned his steps towards the town, choosing the most ill-lighted streets and presently reached the open country.

Walking at a brisk pace, and avoiding the most frequented roads, Loser made his way back to Ste. Victoire.

He had nearly reached the village, when the rising mistral dashed the drops of rain in his face. He took shelter under an open shed by the way side, hoping the weather would improve. But when midnight tolled out from the church tower, he again proceeded on his way, despite the stormy wind and fast-falling rain.

"My booty is well worth a few drops of rain," he said to himself, "and there is this advantage at least, in the bad weather, I shall not be liable to meet any one in the street."

Under cover of the darkness, he actually did reach the long rambling building unperceived, and going round to the back, entered by a gate in the outer wall which was always unlocked. Passing through the garden, he came to the quadrangle of which the church and convent formed three sides, the outer being shut in by a high wall; the door leading to the inner courtyard was bolted, but Loser knew where there was a broken window through which he could easily gain access to the old kitchen, now used sometimes for the manufacture of olive oil. Groping about between empty casks and presses he found his way to the flight of stairs leading to the second floor. There he stopped, listened awhile, and then taking off his boots crept up the stairs. Stillness reigned everywhere; only the wind howled dismally in the empty corridors.

And now the man's courage suddenly failed him. This was the first really criminal act of his life, for which perhaps he would incur long imprisonment. Long years ago he had cast his belief in God and in a future life to the winds; but if a child receives a truly Christian education, the fibres of faith deep down in the soul, are not lightly eradicated, and Loser had had a good mother. Now all at once, as he stood listening in the pitch-dark passage, the remembrance of the mother whom he had lost but too soon, came back to his mind; he seemed to hear again the words she said to him on the eve of his First Communion, after his confession: "My boy, promise me now, and promise our Lord to-morrow, that you will try to be steady, or your headstrong ways will surely get you into trouble."

The promise he thought with tears had alas! not been kept, and his mother's prophecy had indeed come true. On account of his wild pranks he had been expelled from the gymnasium, and only been forgiven through the intercession of a Priest to whom he was related; once he barely escaped being taken before the magistrate; at the University he squandered the slender fortune his parents left him, lost his faith, and acquired a bad name through his vicious habits. Finally to elude his creditors, he had hastily enlisted; and the rough life of a soldier had drawn him deeper into the abyss of social degradation and moral turpitude. And after the war, as we have seen, he had gone from one situation to another, losing each in turn through his unprincipled conduct, until, for the sake of a living, he had accepted the post of sacristan in a village church. Now he was on the eve of committing an actual crime, and the memory of his mother rose up before him like a warning angel to deter him from it.

Alas! in vain grace made this ap-

peal to his heart. "Don't be a fool," he said to himself. "How many men who are highly esteemed rob their neighbors of hundreds of pounds through stock jobbing! The struggle for existence compels one to it. Besides I am taking it out of no man's pocket, no one will be the poorer. If the hospital is not built by charitable contributions, the Government will build a far better and larger one. Now for it!"

Loser felt his way along the wall until he reached the corner formed by the junction of the two wings of the building. While he stood in the space between the little kitchen and the priest's apartments, he thought of the carving knife lying in the table drawer. Should he go in and fetch it? It might be useful in self-defence. He found his way to the table with some difficulty; on putting his hand in the drawer he touched the knife directly. But he thrust it back somewhat roughly. "I do not want to do any harm either to Montmoulin or his mother," he said, "besides I might stumble in the dark with the stupid thing in my hand, and cut myself. I will light the little lantern, though, which his reverence carries with him to the church of a morning." Striking a match, he found the lantern immediately, for he was thoroughly acquainted with all the priest's habits. Covering it with his coat, Loser cautiously stepped across the corridor, and after listening at the open door took occasion of a violent gust of wind, to open it gently. By the light of the lantern he perceived that there was no one in the room. Noiselessly he crept on tip-toe to the place where the desk stood, and taking the key from his waistcoat pocket, with beating heart he was about to put it in the lock when—he could hardly believe his eyes—there was another key in the lock—he turned it, and found the treasure was gone!

The thief was furious in being outwitted. He had laid his plans so cleverly, as he thought, and now this stupid Priest had seen through it all, and in the simplest way possible, had completely balked him. "Who would have thought," he broke out in his rage, "that the canting fool would have taken his money bags to bed with him like an old miser! I would sooner strangle him with my two hands than go out of this convent without his pelf. I will have the money," and he stepped with an oath to the door of the bedroom. He turned the handle, but found it was bolted; at the same time a woman's voice called out in that you Francis?"

"Confound it all!" murmured the disappointed man. "What can I do now? If I burst open the door the old wretch will set up shrieking so loud, that she will be heard in the village. Besides I cannot be sure that the priest will come back at any moment. It will not do to use force, at any rate just now. I must wait some other opportunity." Acting on this conviction, he moved stealthily away, replaced the lantern in its former position in the kitchen, and withdrew to one of the empty cells, there to concoct fresh schemes for the accomplishment of his object.

After spending some time in thought he went back to fetch his boots from the place where he left them; then he took the large knife out of the kitchen drawer and proceeded, guiding himself by the wall and creeping along on tip-toe, to the tribune, where he descended the winding stairs to the little room adjoining the sacristy where poor Charles had been so terrified at the sight of the death's head. "I am safe here," he said to himself. "Nobody will come near this lumber-room, and I shall be able to keep a look out over the church and the cloisters, and watch for a favorable opportunity. It is very cold here, though, Ah, there is the pall!" He laid the knife down upon the ground took a good draught from his flask of cognac, wrapped the pall round him, and settled himself to sleep. "Hah! I am emancipated from all foolish superstitions," he muttered. "I believe that murther there is nothing to be afraid of. Yet there is something very uncanny about this wretched pall. What a coward I must be, to fancy the dead can come back! And yet for all this brag, he was unable to sleep, until he had nearly emptied his flask, then he lay in a half-dozed state until daylight recalled him to himself.

(To be Continued.)

A JESUIT ANNIVERSARY.

Fort William, Ont., has of late years become an important place, and is destined on account of its situation and of the ever increasing traffic from the West to East, to develop into a large trading centre. It had for its founders the Jesuits and the Hudson's Bay Company. The same may be said of many another important town in Canada. The 22nd July, was the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the first Jesuit Mission at Fort William. The following very interesting account of the mission was sent by one of the Order to a city daily, and it is certainly deserving of reproduction—both on account of its accuracy and of the details that it furnishes:

"In the year 1848 Fathers Fremont and Choni, S.J., in search of a place to carry on missionary work, for which the members of the society of the Catholic Church are so justly fa-

mous, came up in the company of Indians into Lake Superior and established a mission to the Indians at a point then, and still known as Pigeon Point. Owing to the fact of the international boundary not being very clearly defined and there being a difficulty in obtaining supplies, the reverend fathers did not long remain there. After one year they loaded up their canoes and coasted along the shores of Thunder Bay, until they reached the mouth of the Kaministiquia River. Touching at the Hudson's Bay Company's post and communicating with "Governor" McIntyre they learned of the pagan Indians in the neighborhood and that night, 21st of July, 1849, pitched their camp near the sight of the present "Mission" and determined to remain and instruct the tribe. Next day being Sunday, both remained quiet save for the celebration of Mass; but on the following day the work of settlement was commenced. Both these missionaries, it is of interest to know, came

as natives from Lorraine, then a dependency of France.

"The two fathers, with the assistance of the Indians, in time erected a small dwelling of logs, a church and a school, none of them very pretentious and a few other less important structures. Father Fremont labored on in this field for four years, leaving in 1853. His work in this world did not continue much longer, for he was drowned in July of the following year at Mississauga on the North shore of Lake Huron. Father Choni continued to labor on until by a strange coincidence his life closed at a place in the neighborhood of his late partner, he dying December 1877 at Wukemiking, Manitoulin Island.

"Rev. Father Dominic au Raquet came to replace Father Fremont and labored at the post until 1877, twenty-three years, when he left to fill the position left vacant at Wukemiking by the death of Rev. Father Choni, where he still labors. A venerable old man, past the age of eighty and without any physical ailments save a deafness, ever since the year 1842 he has devoted his days to work among the Indians. The charge of the mission has since passed through

many hands and is now presided over by Rev. Father Beaudin, himself a native of Lorraine, now a part of Germany. Father Beaudin made his first visit here in 1882, when he spent the winter of 82-83. Leaving then he did not return until the year 1890 when he stayed just two years and finally returned in 1897.

"One of the oldest pensioners about the place is Brother Jerome, well known by sight in the two towns. He is a lay member who devotes his work in a humble way to the furtherment of his church cause. He has been here thirty-one years.

"There have been no less than three churches destroyed by fire since the edifice was put up, the last blaze being in 1894, when it caught from the burning convent and both went up in smoke. Each succeeding building has been larger and more elaborate than the one which went before. The present building is of frame, neatly painted and has a small cupola on the roof. Its size is 60 x 15, and allowing for the large gallery, is capable of seating 300 persons. To the right of the main entrance, in close proximity to the presbytery, built of stone from McKay's mountains, three stories high with a basement, size 60 x 45. It was erected in 1889 while Father Hebert was in charge with the original intention of having an industrial school in the building; this idea not being carried out the two top stories were not completed and what is finished is now used as a residence by the priest in charge and the lay brothers. Again crossing the small churchyard there is situated on the left a convent where abide, five sisters of the Order of St. Joseph, the head home for which is situated in Peterboro, Canada.

"The sisters first came to reside here about twenty-five years ago. Almost their entire time is occupied in educating the children of the Indians, who remain under the same roof as themselves, the boys being kept until they are about twelve years of age and the girls until they become young women. At the present time there are twenty children under their charge. The building now in use is quite modern, having been erected in 1891, on the site of the first one that was put up; the former was much larger and the sisters were then able to take under their protection orphans, the children of white parents as well as dark being welcomed.

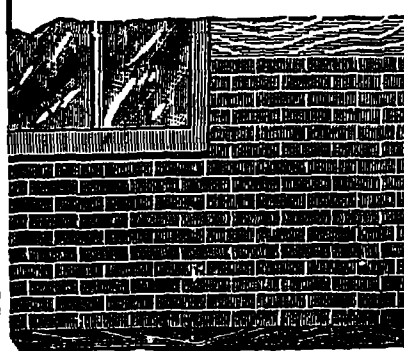
"The list given embraces all the buildings which belong to the mission proper, except some extensive out-buildings in the rear. The members of the little Jesuit colonies have each to stand on their own base and this mission has come on in a creditable manner. They now own several head of cattle, some horses and have under cultivation about sixty acres of farm land from which they raise sufficient vegetables to supply their own use and dispose of in town. "The Indians now residing at the mission, calculated to be about 250 in all, live in log houses of their own about forty being up, and with two exceptions, a man and his squaw they all have renounced heathenism and accepted all the rites of a Christian religion. The men act in most cases as laborers, some as guides or do a little fishing, while the women help to make a living by "choring" around the towns or as young domestics go out into service of families."

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