

AILEY MOORE

TALE OF THE TIMES SHOWING HOW EVILCTIONS, MURDER AND SUCH-LIKE PARTISAN ARE MANAGED AND JUSTICE ADMINISTERED IN IRELAND TOGETHER WITH MANY STIRRING INCIDENTS IN OTHER LANDS

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CHAPTER IX  
SHOWING HOW LORD KINMAGARRA AND MR. JOYCE SNAPPER SENT GERALD MOORE TO JAIL

About one week after the burglary and robbery just detailed, Father Mick Quinlivan, having finished his morning duties at the church, was returning to his pleasant home. The good man almost always came by the private passage, which, as we have informed the reader, led to his house but seeing just outside the gate, a man in the attitude of expectation, he took off his purple stole, which he reverently kissed, and quietly folding it over his shoulder, he put the big breviary on top of it, and placed both under his arm—a place which seemed made for them, they fitted there so snugly. Father Mick then took the tail of his cassock, and throwing it over the disengaged arm, proceeded down the aisle towards the entrance.

Father Mick looked as happy as usual, although he was going to a late breakfast. The old gentleman always felt quite comfortable after a "good confessional." A good confessional meaning to him a more particular gathering of people, but more particularly if many "stay-aways" were to be found among them.

Father Mick had a wonderfully great number of plans for working upon the consciences of "stay-aways." He visited them, waited for them on the road, met them in the most out-of-the-way places, and at all hours, times and seasons. He rarely threatened any one, old Father Mick; but his old eyes would rest upon the sinner so lovingly, and he would hear his excuse, or may-be he would hear him so quietly, in fact, he was so much in word and truth, "Father" Mick, that it was a hard heart that could resist him.

What favored the old man very much, too, was that he was known to be poor, and never appeared to be rich. The priest's place is in the heart; and well Father Mick knew that rings and equipages, and a "dashing horse," cannot fit in the heart of the cottager. He'll admire them, and God help us, as nature is weak, it may be he will envy them, but oh! he will not love them. And as Father Mick believed that much of the work of a priest is to be done by "love," he took care to be all things to all men.

"By the heart," the good priest used to say to a young curate, who lived in a different part of the parish but came to see him twice a week—"By the heart," he used to say, "is believed unto justice. Tom, avic," he would say, "Tom, always seize the heart! Eh, isn't that the way? Och! and our poor people have only one love to them; the world is down on them only their own priest! And so how their eyes brighten when we come near them, and how hearty and joyful they look, when they can do us a hand's turn. Ah, Tom, they're a fine people, so they are—we can't love them enough!" Then Father Mick would give you histories of France, and of Spain, and Italy, and England—of course, all tending to prove the superiority of the "old stock;" and he would look up to heaven, and "thank God!" that Ireland had been always a "true" one.

Let us add another trait in the pariah priest, that he delighted in a long "sit" of a morning; not even for the "good," but for the very pleasure of the thing. It was so con-soling—indeed, exciting—to see the deeply sinful humbling themselves before the face of God; and then the rich humiliation of beholding the virtue of simple souls, often nothing less than angelic. Frequently, the good confessor would raise his eyes, and silently clasp his hands, and his bosom would overflow, until the tears ran down his cheeks, while the humble child of industry made its little accusation, and believed it had been very unfaithful to its Creator, because a shadow, scarcely sensible to any conscience save its own, had passed over the pure spirit. "Ah, my God!" Father Mick would say, "how humbled and how thankful one must feel, eh?"

Father Mick, then, with his hair combed back, and his breviary and the tail of his cassock disposed of as aforesaid, made his egress at the principal gate, and was soon joined by a young peasant, whom he did not know, but whom he "liked the look of," and with him—the young peasant—Father Mick fell into a deep and interesting conversation. They frequently paused on the way up towards Father Quinlivan's little wicket; and Father Mick then would move back from his companion, and look into his face; and the companion, placing the point of his stick between his two shoes, and leaning upon it, would talk very fervently. But when they came to the gate both paused and stopped, as if by common consent; it was evident that the young peasant was going no farther.

A sweet scene was the one which presented itself outside Father Mick's little hall-door—a sweet scene and a happy one—and the old man looked upon it, perhaps, sadly. Three young girls, neatly and cleanly attired—wearing no shoes, however—two flaxen-haired and one dark, were teaching a little child, a very little child, to walk. Two held the little creature by the hands, and the

third stood a few feet apart, with open arms and "shining toy," to give the young traveller reward and security. On an ottoman—a plain one—at the door, sat a young lady, she held it in her left hand, but still held it in her left hand, while with lips half parted, and full, fond eyes, she viewed the entertainment of the innocents. Father Mick looked at the young lady and the children, and poor old good heart, he wept unobserved as he looked at them.

Ailey Moore has made her usual visit to the good pastor's oratory; but to-day she has with her the dead Peggy Hynes' baby, and she is thinking of its beauty and its fortunes, while some of the little girls, who always follow her, are in ecstasies at being allowed to share the nursing.

The moment Ailey saw Father Mick she ran to meet him, and the eldest of the girls whipped the child on one side.

"Happy years! summer days! to my little Ailey!" said the old clergyman.

"Indeed, sir," answered the sweet girl, looking affectionately on him; "indeed, you stay in the church too long."

"I'm moo an is braav thaov na teumpull!" "Many a sunny day in the church yard shade, a cushla," replied Father Mick.

"This is not the place made for peace, agra," he continued, "but the place for labor; though sometimes the labor itself is so happy, Ailey."

And she looked at him again, for she felt he was holy—the fine old man.

"Ailey!" he said, so solemnly, that the poor thing turned pale. "Ailey, never look for anything in this world but trial; don't a enshla! Our dear Lady! always go to her, Ailey, avourneen, and seek no better fortune than to be in her company."

"Something has happened father!" said Ailey, ardently.

"Come, let me see your little daughter Aileen!" said the priest, paying no attention to her last remark.

"Come, I have hardly seen her at all," he continued; and pocketing his hand into his waistcoat, he brought forth a medal of the Immaculate Conception. "Come, let me see if Aileen knows her Mother!" and, bending down, he held forth the right medal. The little child put forth its arms, and held up its little rose lips to the mouth of Father Mick. Children know people's characters, they say, and certainly they gave—the children did—a unanimous vote in favor of Father Mick. He took the baby in his old arms, having given the stole and breviary to Ailey, and said he would go in to breakfast. It was then 10.30 o'clock in the forenoon of a sultry day.

TO BE CONTINUED

AN EASTER BLESSING

There was a deal of excitement in the little townships when the news was first bruited about that the old house on the hill, known for ages past as the Great House, was again to pass into new hands. It was not the first time that a change had been made in the proprietorship of the place. Indeed, the Great House was a veritable gormandizer for the gobbling up of successive aspirants to the ownership of the property, which seemed to be determined to act an elusive part in getting rid of the pretensions of men by crunching them between its giant jaws or wounding them so sorely as to make them long for the moment of deliverance from the top of the hill that had charmed them and snared them. If you had ever seen the house on the hill, you would not be surprised that any man with a touch of the poetic in his soul would be tempted to brave all the bugbears that hobble about in the guise of Fate, and stake his last cent in exchange for the joy of being the master of the hill and the Great House. God had done much for the hill, which rose like a queen from the bed of the valley. The green, the richest green run of softness, which were braided and seemed with varicolored blossoms that still followed the irregular line in which their progenitors had been sowed by the girlish fingers of Nature, when she first became the bride of the Eternal. And man, seemingly, had followed out the design of God to make the hill one of the fairest children of His hands, softening down the crudities of over-generous Nature and bearing thither the treasures that had adorned some of her own daughters. It was not strange, then, that the great mansion which dominated the top of the hill stood there as a king, indeed, whom winds might buffet and snows assail without his taking any more notice of them than the mad Lear took of the wild elements. King the Great House was, and king alone. It never allowed any of the several proprietors to dispute sovereignty with it. From the day on which the first owner had committed suicide in the drawing room, in a fit of madness, that was said to have resulted from the loss of fortune brought about by the lavish expenditure upon the new estate, and his three daughters had gone forth into the world with a mere pittance, the Great House had entered upon its career of decimation. In the lives of the five succeeding purchasers of the property there happened many an event which could be turned into an old-fashioned five-act tragedy, but I forbear recounting them to you. There there was a curse upon the place none of the inhabitants of the little town at the foot of the hill ever doubted for an instant. The memory

of the self-murderer stretched on the floor of the drawing room had become as much a part of the estate as the green terraces and the odd-shaped towers that pointed to the heavens, so that it was a source of perpetual surprise when after a few months of quiet on the hill, during which time no one dared to tempt the darkness in that vicinity from fear of the tragic ghosts which must necessarily walk there, a new family would take possession with a seeming indifference of the fate which the observant villagers knew to be pursuing them.

To the latest owner of Great House there was no tragedy discernible in the history of those who had preceded him, as told to him by the few of the townfolk with whom he came in contact, either in the casual meetings in the valley or in their capacity of servants at the house. To him it all seemed a matter of finances. It required a great deal of money to attempt the management of the hill property, more than any of his predecessors had possessed, hence their inability to make ends meet and the ensuing heartaches and tragedies. As to the curse upon the house, he trusted to his millions, his mines famous in all the world, for the effective lifting of it from the hill and from the hearts of the people of the town. So much the better, thought he, if they did think there was a curse upon the place; it would keep them where they belonged, away from his orchards and his gardens, the sight of which had attracted him even more than the stately towers of the old mansion.

And so the house and grounds were soon delivered from the neglect which the years and the lack of funds had brought upon them. If there was any drawback to the complete enjoyment of Alexander Merritt in the midst of all his money, it was the thought that the dear wife, whom he had buried the year before, his mines had cast forth their gold, when he was but a poor real estate agent, was not there to share with him the fruit of his good luck. That had been seven years before, and the little girl she had left in the world after her, she but a child of three, was now the only thing in the world to make the saddened husband think that life was at all worth living. She was his dearest treasure, even more than the millions which the world envied him. It especially was for her sake that she had bought Great House. Here she was free from the restraint of the city home, no matter how spacious and magnificent. Here she might roam to her heart's content a true little princess in a realm that was like to a fairy kingdom. To the outer world it was all a golden dream. The wealthy mine owner and his ten year old Dorothy soon became such an object of admiration in the town that the history of the Great House and its threatening curse grew to be but the remnant of a fairy story of pre historic times. At any rate, the vague rumors that reached the ears of Alexander Merritt caused him no uneasiness. He was happy with his child, happy with his money and all that money can buy.

"It may be all right," said Martin Lally to Giblin, the gardener. "He had just brought the horse around to the front door to take his master to the train."

"It may be alright now. People nowadays has no faith, and it's only the likes of you will laugh at a curse put upon anything, but as sure as I'm alive the day will come when you'll see it again, if you stay here that long. I've been here now since the price was built, and I've seen others here just as happy and contented as the master and Miss Dorothy; but then, something always happens."

"Well said Giblin, 'I'd take my chances with it if I had all his money. Funny you stay here if there's such a curse on the place.'"

"Well, the curse can do me no harm. It's only them as own the place. Anyone else can escape the curse. You never heard the story of it? Well, I'll tell you—"

But Martin did not tell Giblin the story that day, for Mr. Merritt came from the house at the very moment that Martin was about to launch forth into ancient history.

The man frowned as he caught the closing words of his coachman. "What is that you were talking about Lally?" he said as they drove out through the gate. "You don't mean to tell me that you believe there is a curse on this place, you that have been here all these years! I thought it was only a few old women of the town that dared to think of such a thing."

"You mustn't pay any attention to me, sir," said Martin, "I was only just regaling Giblin."

"Still you believe it, Martin. You have been here all these years, ever since the house was built; surely you have a reason for holding to such a belief all this time."

"I have sir," said Martin. "It was me that cut down the body of old Grace after he committed suicide."

"Well, I don't wonder that you were frightened. It's a wonder to me that you remained here after such a terrible thing. Most men would be frightened out of their lives."

"Well, sir beggars can't be choosers. Men have to live in spite of their belief in ghosts and such things. I left the place many a time, but every time a new owner comes I soon find myself back at the same job. I suppose it will be so till the end."

That means that you think I am going to follow all my predecessors, and be obliged to leave the Great House. You don't know my stubbornness, Lally. The devil himself couldn't dislodge me from the place. I like it too well, and the little one—

why it has been life to her. It would be murder to take her away. She loves every blade of grass about the place."

"Just like the first missus," said Martin. "She was a darling, Mr. Merritt. We all worshipped the ground she walked on, she was that beautiful and kind. The master loved her, too, but I saw that she was afraid of him. She seemed to be a different person when she went to drive with me alone. It was all over religion, as I found out afterwards. She had been a Catholic of the old stock; her mother, a good honest Irishwoman that educated her own Catholic. She was barely out of school when she met the master, and nothing would do for him but to marry her. He had some kind of hatred for the Catholic Church and the Irish, and he soon showed it to the poor woman. Many a time I could see the tears come to her eyes as she passed the little church in the town, afraid to go in for fear the husband would make trouble about it. I told her she ought to do it in spite of him, and saved her own soul and the soul of her daughters—there were three of them, sir. But she never seemed to get the courage. One day when I had her out driving she was taken sick suddenly. I brought her home as fast as I could. The first thing she asked me to do was to go and get a priest for her. I ran the horses all the way and brought back the priest. It was Father Connors, God be good to him this day, and he was the fine man. Well, when he got to the door, there was the master standing in his way, and he says to him, 'Who sent for you, sir?' said the priest says, 'Your wife sent for me, and I would like to see her.' 'Well, go back where you came from,' said the master, and he slammed the door in the face of the priest, and him having the Blessed Sacrament with him. You know what that is."

"I confess I do not," said Mr. Merritt.

"Well, it's the Holy Communion, if you can understand that any better."

"I see. Go on."

"Well, that night she died, and the maid, that was a Protestant, said it would take a tear from a stone to hear how the poor woman called for a priest; and that man that said he loved her wouldn't send for him."

"But what has that to do with the curse, Martin?"

"If you were a Catholic, sir, you would understand. The Lord, you know, that he and the Jews turned Him away, just as the Jews turned Him away. And I said then, as I say now, that there is a curse on the place till they send for the Lord again and welcome Him to the place where He was treated like a dog. But the man had no luck. They said it was killed because he lost his money that he killed himself, but I know it was the curse. You can't fool the Lord, I always said."

"That's a real Irish fairy story, Martin," said Mr. Merritt. "All that harmonizes well with your beliefs; but you couldn't expect a man who didn't believe in such things himself to have any scruples about turning away a man from his door if he didn't want him."

"Well," said Martin, "I suppose she was to blame herself for a good deal but just the same it was the Lord that was turned away."

"And I suppose," laughed Mr. Merritt, you would have me turn Catholic just because you think there's harm coming to my house if I don't bring the priest into it."

"No man is made a Catholic against his will, sir. But, anyway, there's the story as I told it many and many a time, and it always came true."

Mr. Merritt had many a good laugh that day among his friends at the expense of his Irish coachman, and that very night, at the dinner which was given at Great House in honor of the eleventh birthday of the beloved Dorothy, the funniest story told was his account of Martin's version of the curse that was supposed to rest upon the top of the hill.

"Fancy the poor fellow believing that he eats God in that bread that the priests give him," remarked Mrs. Drexel, the wife of his business partner, and with the laugh that followed the witicism there passed from the mind of Mr. Merritt all thought of the evil genius who was supposed to be co-partner with him in the ownership of Great House.

But the story had not escaped the eager ears of the little girl who sat silent at the table. It was to her a strange story, stranger, indeed, than any she had ever read of in books. She could not quite explain it all, how the priest, just like the man pointed out to her in the town by Martin, could bring God with him; and she determined to ask Martin all about it as soon as she would see him. An opportunity came the next day, when the faithful old coachman, to whom her father entrusted her implicitly, brought around the carriage for the daily drive of the little princess.

"Martin," she whispered as soon as he lifted her into the carriage, "just where was God standing when that man turned Him away and wouldn't let Him in?"

"What man?" asked Martin.

"I mean about the priest. Father said you told him all about it yesterday. He told all about it at my party. It's a funny story, isn't it, and you never told it to me."

"I don't tell that very often, Miss, for most people laugh at it. I'll show you the place when we come back."

"All the people laughed last night," said Dorothy, "and Mrs. Drexel said that it all comes from teaching

people to believe that bread and wine can be turned into God. Do you believe that, Martin? I know you didn't because it's awfully funny, don't you think so?"

"You mustn't talk that way about holy things, Miss," said Martin. "You do believe it, then?" said Dorothy.

"Of course, Miss. It's no more than what the Lord told us to believe. The night before He died He took the bread and He said 'This is My Body,' and the substance of the bread was changed into the substance of His Body."

Martin repeated the story, as many a time he had told his catechism lesson in his youth.

"I never heard of that before," said Dorothy. "I heard about the Blood of Christ, and how God loves little children and all the lovely stories about Rebecca and Rachel."

The girl was silent for a time and then she turned eagerly to the old man.

"And do you receive God really and truly into your stomach?" she asked.

"That's what we believe," answered Martin.

"It must be nice," she said. "They don't have such things in our church. Anyway, I don't go to church. Father says my goodness can give me all the religion I need. But he never tells me things like you."

For several days succeeding her interview with Martin Miss Dorothy Merritt was distracted in her studies. There was one great problem which she was trying to get into her mind with a satisfactory explanation, and that was the possibility of a little girl receiving into her little body the great God who filled all the earth and sea and sky and even beyond all that. The problem, however, soon became too much for her shoulders, and she sought assistance in bearing the burden by proposing to Miss Hilton, the sour, bespectacled governess, the question as to how bread and wine could be changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord.

"It's all nonsense," said Miss Hilton. "Wherever in the world did you get that queer notion?"

"I heard papa tell about it at my birthday dinner, and so I went and asked Martin all about it," said Dorothy.

"Well, Martin ought to be ashamed of himself," said Miss Hilton indignantly. "The idea of filling your head with such foolishness. It's only Catholics could believe a thing so outrageous as the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord."

"But if the Lord said so, Miss Hilton," remonstrated Dorothy, "we ought to believe it. There's lots of hard things to understand in the Bible, but you often said that we must believe what God says even if we can't understand it, and Martin says it's in the Bible how God said 'This is My Body.'"

"Now, Miss Dorothy, I refuse to talk such foolishness; and moreover, I shall tell your father to prevent Martin from perverting your reason."

"Please don't," pleaded the girl. "He only just answered my questions."

But when Miss Hilton determined to do a thing she was thereafter immovable. And so before the night Mr. Merritt had heard how his coachman had been trying to make a Catholic of his beloved child. To him it was an unpardonable piece of impertinence, and, heedless of the explanations of Martin himself and the tears of Dorothy, he dismissed from his service the faithful coachman, whose boast it was that he had been at the Great House even before the days of the curse.

"Well," said Giblin sarcastically, as Martin was preparing to leave, "I guess you were right about that party, Lally, only it struck the wrong party this time."

"Never fear," said Martin, "I'm old and I can stand it. It's better to be on me than on the little one."

And so he passed from the hill to the little town below in the valley.

That night the new coachman arrived at the hill.

To Dorothy it seemed as if a part of her life had gone when on the following day she entered the carriage for her accustomed drive. It was all different now, with a strange driver upon the seat, where often she had sat by the side of Martin, listening to his queer talk and funny stories. What a different companion he had been from the sour governess, who was now by her side, by the command of Mr. Merritt, who had not seen fit to trust his daughter to the sole care of the new coachman. Even the horses seemed to miss the familiar hand of the old Irishman, for they were restless under the strange rein.

What it was that startled the horses no one ever knew, but scarcely had they descended the hill and passed through the gateway of the park, when they dashed off on a wild run through the town. The driver tugged and strained, but he was powerless against the brute force of the animals. At the sudden turn in the road, where it branched off into the country the carriage was upset; Miss Hilton was thrown out upon the rocks by the way, with Dorothy clinging fast to her from deadly fright, while the coachman was dragged along in the dust at the heels of the maddened horses.

During those days there was a pall upon the hill. Miss Hilton had been killed instantly by the fall upon the rocks, and the coachman had been mangled beyond all recognition. The life of Dorothy had been saved by the manner in which she had clung to the governess, thus avoiding the impact with deadly rocks. But she

had not come from the accident, un-injured. For several days she lay as one dead. The most famous specialists of the country came to the hill to do their best to give back life and youth to the afflicted child. She would live, they said, but her spine had been injured seriously, and she would ever be an invalid.

To the afflicted father the sentence of the doctors had made the sun descend forever from the crest of the hill, and like a thunderclod in the sky he saw the perpetual curse rise over Great House, the strange fulfillment of the great prophecy at which he had laughed in the days when misfortune seemed always verterible by the power of his millions. The wild winds of winter came and raged against the towers, and the master thereof knew that the message they brought was that he too must leave the place and follow in the path of those predecessors of his who had also felt the killing breath of some dread curse.

So came the spring. By ceaseless care and the best attention that money could procure, Dorothy was able to come from the invalid's chair and have the nurse wheel her about the house. It was a dreary time for the little princess. Suffering had worn her to a mere shadow, and the despair seen in the eyes of her father doubled her anguish. Even God seemed far away, as some being in the clouds who seemed not to know that there was such a thing as suffering in the lives of the young and innocent. If He were only nearer, thought Dorothy; if she could be sure that He was close to her, knew her sorrows and pains and would stoop to touch her with His pitying hand and heal her, as He had healed the afflicted ones in the Bible stories. It was then that she recalled the words of Martin about the Body and Blood of the Lord, and the tears came into her eyes as she thought of the happiness it must be to receive the great God into one's own body. Could it be true, she asked herself over and over, could it indeed be true. Did the Bible really say such a thing? The Holy Book became for her in truth the very Word of God as she pored over the pages of the Gospel in search of a confirmation of the strange doctrine for whose truth her little soul was crying.

And then one morning when the sun seemed to be shining upon the top of the hill with a greater radiance than ever, she came upon those words of our Lord Himself—"Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood ye have no life in yourselves. Who shall eat of this that golden morning the grace of God flooded the soul of the little girl. The virgin heart of the maiden called forth through the sickness and the pain into the Bridegroom, and over the sun-kissed hills He sped on His way, and He Who came was the very Son of God.

There were tears in the eyes of the child as the door of her room opened and her father entered bearing in his arms a great bunch of lilies.

"Do you know what day this is?" he asked as he stooped to kiss her.

"It is Easter," she answered as she took the lilies and buried her face in them. "My papa is kind to remember it with the lilies."

"I had not remembered it," he answered. "It was Martin. He brought you these this morning. He is coming back to live at the hill. He will drive you out now every day, till you are strong enough to go away."

"Am I going away from here?" she asked with a disappointment in her voice.

"Yes, dear; we are both going away. We must go before worse happens. Martin was right when he said there is a curse on the place."

The girl hesitated for a moment, and then as if taking courage from the consciousness of some power within her she made her confession of faith.

"But you forget all that Martin said, papa dear. God was sent away from this house a long time ago. You must invite Him back. Let Him come to me. I want Him. To-day I know He has come into my heart. See what the Bible says: 'Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood ye have no life in you.'"

The astonished father was about to remonstrate, but there was a light in his daughter's eyes which deterred him. For a moment he looked questioningly at her and then he spoke.

"Shall I send Martin for the priest?" he asked.

"If you love me—yes," she answered; and a flood of peace came into her soul.

The recovery of Dorothy Merritt, and her development into beautiful, healthy young womanhood, was a puzzle to the physicians who had attended her, but to Martin Lally, who was prouder than a king on the day when he drove Miss Dorothy to the little Catholic Church in the town, it was but the simple fulfillment of his own prophecy.

"I told you how it would be," he said to Giblin the afternoon. "No place can have any luck that throws out the Lord. And the day that Father Riley stepped across the threshold with Holy Communion for Miss Dorothy I could see the clouds scatter in the heavens, and I knew that the curse was gone from the place forever. How do I know? Well, I know, that's all."—H. F. B. in The Magnificent.

It is with human character very often as it is with a torch—the more it is shaken the more it shines.—Newton.

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