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

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CHAPTER XXIII. An Unexpected Visitor.

In the meantime Father Montmoulin and the trial that excited so much interest in Aix, were well nigh forgotteo. Events succeed each other a nine days' wonder is soon over and gone. Even the anti-clerical journals seemed to have consigned to oblivious the scandalous occurrence at Ste. Victoire.

On a cold stormy evening in February, 1891, the solicitor Meumer was working by lamplight in his office at a law suit concerning some right of way, a tedious and tiresome litigation, which he had to bring into Court a fow days later. After a the wind was driving a shower of snow and frozen rain, the solicitor was just putting together his papers proparatory to leaving off work, when the office boy entered and announced that a stranger wanted to see him

on urgent business,
"A stranger at this time and in
this weather!" Meunier exclaimed in surprise. "What is his name?"

"He would not tell his name, Sir," the boy replied. Then he added "If I were you Sir, I would not let him in. He is fairly well-dressed, but there is something so strange and wild in his manner."

Mr. Meunier lighted a cigarette, and stood for a minute irresolute, without answering. Then he decided that it would be best to see the

"Show him in," he said to the servant, "but do you stay within call, in case I should want you," he stationed himself on the hearthrug, with his back to the tire, awaiting his visitor.

The stranger entered in an evident state of excitement. As he advanced into the room, and the light fell upon his countenance, the solicitor started involuntarily.

"I believe you are the lawyer who defended the priest of Ste. Victoire, in the law courts three years ago, are you not?" the stranger inquired, as he stood twisting about a grey felt hat nervously in his hands.

"I am, Sir, at your service. And I fancy I know who you are, although as far as I am aware, I have never seen you before," Mr. Meunier replied.

"I daresay you do. The sabre.cut across my face makes me a marked man. Yes, I am the sacristan Loser, whom you vainly endeavored to trace.

purpose of making a confession. For silence. "You wish to tell me something. Mr. Loser, I think," he said

gravely.
"Yes, that is what I have come all the way from Valperaiso in South America. And now that I am here, I cannot bring myself to say it." The man stopped short, and wiped the perspiration from his temples. Then in a hoarse voice he jerked out the words: "The priest is innocent. It was I that did it."

It cost him an immense effort to utter these words; as soon as the pastures, nor the moneys his managstrain was removed, he burst into convulsive sobs. Mr. Meunier pushed dividends he received on the sums he a chair towards him, and Loser had invested in the saltnetre mines dropped into it utterly broken down; of Turapaca,-in none of these things it was a long time before he could recover himself sufficiently to answer time, he bethought himself of a plan the questions addressed to him. In whereby, he could learn the truth fact the selicitor felt some doubt as to whether he was in his right

"Have you come over from South America with the purpose of making this confession? What was the motive that induced you to do so?" he

inquired. "To make reparation, to make atonement," ground Loser, "It leaves me no peace!

avert from the incocent priest and enjoying the delicious fruits of his the members of his family, merely through his inability to trace this man, who now sat before him, and who, as it appeared to him, had done his very utmost to cast the guilt of his bloody rime on one who was blameless. His heart swelled with just indignation. Then again be could not resist a feeling of sincere compassion for the wretched criminal, tormented by the stings of conscience, who declared himself desirous to make all the reparation in his power. These two feelings struggled for the mastery within his breast. At length he said, not unkindly, but with an accent of reproach! "Unfortunately, you come rather late with your self-confession. How will you atone for all the misery that you have brought upon the unhappy Father Montmoulin and his aged mother?"

Loser sprang to his feet and wrong his hards. "Good God!" he exclaimed, "is not that what I say to myself by day and by night! Have pity on me, Sir. I know that I cannot undo the past, but I can expinte my crime by laying my head upon the block.'

Compassion got the upper hand in the solicitor's mind. He stretched

out his hand to his visitor, and said: "Pardon me. I did not mean to wound you. Besides, you can make satisfaction in what is most important. Father Montmoulin was not executed, thank God! As far as I know, he is still alive in New Caleso rapidly now-a-days, and in three donia. His mother and sister pre-years' time so much happens, that also both living. And the tourist scandal that the whole affair caused by the shame attaching to Pather Montmoulin's name will be removed by your confession. If only you could have resolved to do this act of justice sooner, when the innocent man

was undergoing his trial !" "Indeed, it neveroccurred to mefora moment that the suspicion of murder would fall on Father Montanoulin' Loser replied, "I was on board ship, on the way to Buenos Ayres, while glance at the window, against which the case was being tried here. Besides I thought for certain, that he would at any rate, when it came to that, say that he had seen me, or even that I hadbeen to confession to him; in fact I believed it most likely that he would not consider the seal of confession binding on him in regard to a penitent who had sought safety in flight. And for the matter of that, I persuaded myself that what the clergy preached about the secrecy of the confession was all idle talk, and confession itself only invented by them as a means of obtaining influence. I had read so much of that sort of thing in had books and infidel papers. That is what I thought then, and I blamed myself for having been such a fool as to go to confession in the first access of terror and agitation produced by the fatal deed of which I was guilty."

"Then it was as Father Regent and I surmised. Father Montmoulin was made a victim of the seal of confession!" Mr. Meunier exclaimed. "Yes, he was a victim to the seal of confession," Loser replied in a sorrowful tone. "It was the knowl-

edge of that fact that brought me to a better mind, and made me resolve to offer reparation and make amends for my crime. I will tell you how it came about." Then Loser began a lengthy narrative, to which the lawyer listened with ever increasing interest. He told how he had made good his escape, taking his passage on board a vessel bound for Buenos Ayres. On arriving at the port, he was sorely afraid of being recognized by the scar on his face, and arrested by the police; for he had little doubt that Father Montmoulin would, either directly or indirectly, have indicated him to the authorities as the probable murderer. But to his astonishment no one said that the pardon only meant that the The solicitor did not utter a syl- a word to him, and he at once joinlable. He looked at the pale, agitat- ed a party of Italian emigrants, who transportation for life. A description ed face of the man before him, and were going across the Pampas to the followed of the conduct of the pris- a fresh and painful trial, nor to postsaw from the working of his features the force of the struggle that Phenomenal luck attended him; the was going on within his breast. He funds wherewith he started were mul- ket, and of his embarkation on guessed that he had come with the tiplied ten-fold, but no accession of board the Durance for his life-long wealth brought peace and content to a few manutes not a sound was his mind. After journeying to and heard but the crackling of the logs, fro he crossed the Andes, and purthe ticking of the clock, and the chased a hacienda near Valparaiso rattling of the hail upon the window for he felt satisfied that his crime, panes. At length Meunier broke the of which he had heard nothing more, was long ago passed out of mind, and thus he could under an assumed name, enjoy the proceeds of his theft without dread of a sword hanging over him. He was however mistaken: the blood he had shed cried aloud for venegeance, and gave him no rest. Nothing afforded him any pleasure; him my orders, and without losing a not the fino estate, charmingly situated with a view of the beautiful bay of Valparaiso, and the snowcrowned summits of the Andes; nor the splendid horses reared on his er brought in to him, nor the large had invested in the saltpetre mines could be take real pleasure. After a concerning the consequences of his crime, in order, as he told himself. to set his mind at rest once for all. Accordingly he wrote under a false name to a well-known house of business in Aix, ordering a box of the dried plums for which Provence is famous, to be sent out to him, at the same time requesting that copies of the "Provence Gazette" for the last three years might be enclosed in The solicitor thought of the terri- the chest, and charged for with the ble fate which he had been unable to goods. He wished, he wrote, while native country in a distant land, to

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revive many happy memories of the past, and learn what had occurred during his three years of exile. The merchant to whom he addressed the letter was pleased to comply with the request, as he bolieved he was doing a kindness to a fellow-courtryman on the other side of the Atlantic, 🛶

"Two days before Christmas," Loser went on, "the case arrived. I locked myself into my room with the bundle of old newspapers and soon looked out the date of the momentous 20th February. In the next number there was the first report of the murder at Ste. Victoire, and the arrest of the parish priest. I laid down the paper in consternation, In the following issues column aftercolumn was filled with mockery and you append your name. As soon as abuse of the zealous pastor of Ste. Victoire, the chief grounds of suspicion against him were enumerated. The arrest of his mother and sister was also mentioned. Presently came upon the most important part of the proceedings, the trial—it ochefore your deposition is said before cupied twelve closely printed colthe authorities. The case will then umns-with trembling eagerness 1 be tried again, and the second hearlooked for the verdict-there it was, ing is certain to result in Pather Condemned to death! My head Montmoulin's acquitta'. swam; my senses seemed to desert

You cannot conceive Sir, how this said just the same to me. He exsentence cut me to the quick. I do pressly told me that I was by no not know how long I paced up and means bound to give myself up to down the room before I could collect justice at the risk of being sentenced myself sufficiently to read through to death. It would be quite enough the trial. Midnight struck before I if I consented that my declaration, laid the paper down. So it was ac- witnessed by the notary, were sent tually true; Father Montmoulin had in to the judge. Father Montmoulin not uttered a syllable that might reveal what I confessed to him, he had not so much as let it be known that Aigutions of his office. And then I had been to confession to him, nay. he did not even own to having seen me that night! And all this because such a brutal way, called for a in his excessive conscientiousness, he feared lest he should in the slightest crime. Besides, would not my perdegree violate his duty as a priest. sonal evidence, given in public, It appeared to me that he never at- far more more to obtain the acquistempted in any way to shift the sus- tal of the prisoner who was so unpicion from his own shoulders to justly condemned, and by making a mine. He kept silence, although his greater impression, contribute more silence entailed ignominy and death to reinstate him in public opinion, on himself the cruellest grief of his than any written confession could mother, and would be the occasion do? I said all this to my confessor, of terrible scandal to untold num- and he agreed with me. Therefore I bers! All this forced itself on me, as I read through the long account and in case I should repent of my of the legal proceedings. When I had resolution, or any accident should finished, I felt positively crushed happen to me, after a fixed time to with shame and remorse; I cried bit-

Presently I turned to the newspapers again, in order to read the end pented of your resolution?" the solof the matter. There were endless at | icitor inquired. ticles about the trial, and a great attempt to exculpate your client by en." suggesting that he was probably pledged to secrecy by the obligations of the confessional, as had ful murder, and you will be sentencbeen recently the case with a priest in Poland. And after all you were correct in your surmise! Other articles followed, making use of this could look for would condemn you affair at Ste. Victoire to serve the to the hard lot of a convict—penal ends of the anti-clerical party, casting contempt on the Church and her ministers. Finally in turning over

caught my eye: The Ste. Victoire tragedy, Pardon of the murderer. For a moment I breathed freely ; hut alas! on looking further I saw who had to exchange his priestly cassock for a convict's jacexile. I read it through to the end By the time I had finished day was breaking, and I heard the cocks crowing in the grey dawn. I reselved to act promptly. I selected the newspapers which gave an account of the trial and the pardon, and folding them up carefully, I put them in an envelope and slipped them into the breast pocket of my coat. Then ! took two thousand gold pesetas out. of my cash-box, called the manager. as soon as I heard him stirring, gave moment mounted my horse and rode over to the Jesuit's House in Valparaiso. I asked for the rector, who I knew understood French, and to him I acknowledged my crime, begging him to assist me in expiating it. He entered into my feelings most kindly and compassionately; he helped me to examine my conscience and prepared me to make a general confession of my past life. This took a long time, but it brought ease to my conscience, and the hope of forgiveness; and this hope in the mercy of God encouraged me to persevere in my determination to do all within my power to make amends for my dreadful crime. The priest of course made me promise to spare no effort to get the unjust sentence reversed, and the innocent prisoner liberated and his name cleared; to restore the stolen money, and make compensation as far as possible to the relatives of the priest for all they had suffered. Above all the sad scandal that had been given must be removed. Not until 1 made a formal deposition in writing concerning the murder of Ste. Victoire, and signed it in the presence of a notary, did he give me absolution. Immediately after Christmas, which I passed in the House of the Fathers, I made my will, disposing of my property in case of my death, and started on my home, choosing the overland route as the quickest and safest. I reached Buenos Ayres just in time to catch the steamer which was leaving for Bordeaux. Yesterday we landed, and I came straight here by train; my

power.' Mr. Meunier had listened with rapt attention to this lengthy narrative. At its close, he pressed Loser's hand and said: "In spite of your past errors, I cannot help respecting you for what you have done. I regard you now as my client, and I assure you your confession will be safe with me. You did well to come to mo first of all. We will certainly have all amends made as lar as possible, but more need not be done

first inquiry was for your residence, Sir, as I had seen your name as the

counsel for the unhappy priest. So

here I am, ready to make amends

and atonement to the utmost of my

than is necessary. You shake your head? Just hear me out. It will be quite easy to make restitution of the stolen money and compensate the Montmoulin family for the pecuniary loss they have sustained, you have only to write a cheque on the Valparaiso bank and leave it in my hands. A reversal of the sentence can also be obtained, by incans of which Father Montmoulin will regain his liberty, and be acquitted of all stain on his character, without your appearing in Court in person. You simply have to sign a confersion of your crime, which I will draw up. As a precaution I will have your signature attested by two witnesses, but they need know nothing of the contents of the document to which that is done, you can return to Chili. by the next steamer, sell your estate and go off to North America or to Australia under an assumed name. will see that you have time to get clear off, out of the reach of the law

Loser smiled sadly, as he answered: "My confessor in Valpararso acted most generously towards me. though he was only fulfilling the onthought the blood of the poor defenceless old lady, which I shed in more complete expiation of my begged him to keep my deposition forward it to Aix. Then I set out on my journey hither."

Have you ever since that time re-

cannot deny that I have wavdeal that was uncomplimentary was ered several times. But reading the said of you, Sir, as the counsel for trial over again always confirmed the defence, and the failure of your | me in the determination I had tak-

> There is very little doubt that the verdict against you will be wiled to death-"

'I expect nothing else." "The most favorable sentence we servitude for life.

"Through my sin Father Montmonlin has had to endure that lot for the pages these words in large type | nearly three years; it is high time that I get his chains taken off, so we will if you please, not delay a single day longer."

"This is then your free, deliberate determination?"

"I had time enough and to spare. to think it all over on the voyage. I beg you not to put my constancy to pone Father Montmoulin's release for one hour longer than can be helped."

"You are right. So let it be. May God give you strength to bear the weight of explation which you have voluntarily taken upon yourself,"

Mr. Meunier him, elf accompanie i the repentant to the police station, where he gave himself up to the artonished Commissioner of Police with was on duty at the time. By a curious coincidence, this man happened to be one of the police agents who had gone with tire magistrate

ther Montmoulin.

to him, "I am sure that you will pulling a load up hill with the brake treat this gentleman, who has come set against him. When his stomach is all the way from South America to out of order, and the allied organs deliver himself up to justice, with of digestion and nutrition impaired, the utmost leniency that the law al- in their functions, a friction is set

that the innocent priest had," Los- duties, A foul stomach makes a foggy

him, and hastened away to the residuant in a log. He forgets appoint dence of the president. Ar. Justice ments, Problems seemed presented to Peultier. "It is Wednesday," he said his mind "wrong end to." This conto himself, "so I shall find the Pro- dition is entirely remedied by the secutor Jouhert and some other Jos- use of Dr. Pierce's Colder Medical tices there, I know they meet on Discovery. It puts the stomaca and this evening every week for a game digestive and nutritive system into a of cards. There is ten striking ! hope I shall not be too late.

He got there precisely at the right moment. The cards had been thrown andthe friends were to disperse, about Meunier was announced.
The gentlemen, who had risen to depart, looked at each other and at him with questioning surprise. The new-comer apologized for intruding upon the president at so unsuitable an hour; he did so, he said, because he had something of great importance to communicate to them. other gentlemen would perhaps kindly remain and hear what a singular thing had occurred. He then repeate I the story he had just heard from Loser's lips. The lawyers listened with profound and growing interest, as was shown by the attention they

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paid to the narrator, and the questions which now and again one or other of them addressed to him.

The Public prosecutor rememberd how ruthlessly he had pilloried the unfortunate criminal, and regretted his sharp speeches. "You are quite convinced of the man's sanity?" he inquired, when Meunier had ended his narrative.

"As sure as I have ever been of

any man's was the reply.
"Heaven be thanked," exclaimed the President, "that I bestirred myself to get a pardon for Montmoulin. We can now hope to be able to do something for him. That is to say, now being torn down for the Tildenif the poor fellow has not succumbed to the horrid climate, and the fearful hardships of a convict's life in the penal settlements."

"At any rate the case must be tried over again on account of this confession," said one of the Judges. "Yes, of course," Joubert replied.

To-morrow morning I chall crossexamine this fellow Loser, and in my report recommend a revision of the proceedings."

'And after looking through it I shall instantly apply to the Home Secretary, to have the man who was so wrongfully condemned cabled for New Caledonia, In how long to could we expect to get him back?" said the President.

"It would take several months at any rate," Meunier answered.

'The telegraphic communication stops short at Brisbane la Australia. The telegram would have to be carried to Port de France by the next steamer touching at that port. Our unhappy friend may be at one of the farthest stations on the larger island, and the journey back would take five or six weeks."

"Well, that will give us abundance of time to get averything ready, so that the case may be brought for a second time into Court immediately upon his arrival, and the wrong which unfortunately has been done him may as far as possible be set right. The fatal thing was that at the first judicial inquiry circumstan- (From the St. John's News, Nov. 10. cesall seemed to point to ben as the perpetrator of the crime, so that despite the able defence of our talented colleague here, there was from the outset Ettle hope of an acquittal."

"If the unhappy Priest had either when before the examining magistrate or in Court, given the least hint that the sacristan had been with him after the crime was comsecutor.

"As the man went to confession to him, he considered himself hound to dony having seen him." Memnier answered. "Father Montmoulin is truly a victim to the seat of confession."

(To be Continued.)

To put the brake on the wagon going down bill is a help to the horse, when the wagon is heavily examining magistrate to in- loaded. But what driver would think stitute the inquiry at Ste. Va- of applying the brake to a loaded to in- loaded. But what driver would think toire, and who had apprehended Pa- | wagon going up hill? If he did, his sensible horses would probably balk. 'Mr. Superintendent," Meunier said Many a man is in the condition of up which has to be overcome in wi-"Let me have the same treatment dition to the performance of daily er said, in a voice of quiet resign - brain, and the man with a disordered stomach has often to grope his Mounier took a friendly leave of way through the day's business like 1 | condition of perfect health, and gives a clear brain, a steady hand and a light step for the day's duties. When constipation clogs the channels of the body, Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Peliets will work an effectual cure of that disastrous disease.

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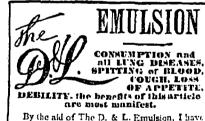
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