

THE BOOK O' FIRE.

(By Rev. J. B. Doherty, M.A., in-mom, in Donohoe's Magazine for August.)

To say that old Shaun Mahaffy had a wonderful old "book learning" would be only stating what every man, woman and gossamer in the three parishes knew. There were those that said—and Father Dunphy the Parish Priest was one—that it would be better for him if he only knew as much as the neighbours. There wasn't a train from Dublin that stopped at the little station of Kibballymore that didn't bring a parcel of books addressed to Shaun—and when Father Dunphy, God rest his soul, saw a saint in Heaven—met him one day coming home and said—"Well, Shaun, let me see what new books are those you have." Shaun grew very confused, and didn't like to give them up. But the priest looked them over, and saw they were old books written by some French or German fellow, who didn't believe in God, and wanted to put everybody else in the same trouble like the fox without the tail. And he looked at Shaun very seriously and solemnly, and said—"So, this is what has been keeping you from coming to mass the last half year. You think now you know more than the neighbours."

"I know I do," said Shaun, during the priest of God, "I know I do, and you can't show me in the Bible anything about going to mass."

"But I can show you something about going to hell in it, Shaun," said Father Dunphy, sharply, "and let me tell you that's where you're driving fast and furious, and I heard that you've also been trying to corrupt some of the young men, undermining their faith. Go home in God's name, Shaun Mahaffy, and burn those poisonous books of yours, and pray to God to open your eyes before 'tis too late."

"And if I don't burn them?" asked old Shaun.

"If you don't," said the priest, "let me tell you your thirst for unholy knowledge will bring your body and soul to a bad end."

That would have been the happy day for old Shaun Mahaffy if he had taken the good priest's advice; but he was so proud of his book knowledge that it never entered his mind to ask God's pardon for his sins, and all the time the sentence of the priest was hanging over him.

It might be about a month from that day Shaun was walking home over the lonesome road between Blay-Alken and his own place, coming from the Fair of Rathmore. He had been delayed on the way, and it was now drawing near midnight, and dark as pitch, when he came to the loneliest part of all near the Black Wood. But old Shaun never thought of the place, or of the hour. He walked along at a smart pace, his head sunk in his breast, thinking of his books and his knowledge. For the first time he was doubtful with regard to the latter. There were so many things that as yet he knew nothing of—so many mysteries to be solved—so many wonders hidden from him which he could never hope to unveil. A sort of despair, heavy as the night shadows, settled down upon him, and at the same time there came a great desire to know all that could be known at whatever cost there might be. He never passed to think what of danger might be in this new passion. Gradually the desire brought with it a sort of delirium, unholy joy, and though he was scarcely conscious of it his lips were already forming a prayer to the Father of all Evil.

Then all at once he felt a shock pass through his body, and a feeling came over him that he was not alone on the dark road. He raised his head. The tall, black figure of a man confronted him, but the gloom prevented him from distinguishing the stranger's features.

"Shaun Mahaffy," said he, "this is a late hour for you to be out of your bed."

The tone of the stranger's voice struck Shaun with a sense of something ominous and disagreeable, but summoning his courage, he answered boldly and testily—"Tis the same for you, my man. I see you know my name, but I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance, I'm sorry to say."

The stranger laughed a jarring and discordant laugh. "Ha, ha, that's good. Why, we're old acquaintances now, and have been very intimate during the last half year since you gave up attending mass. But," he added, "I have something here would interest you. It's a book you'd give your two eyes to see."

Now, at these words, Shaun Mahaffy, in his eagerness, forgot everything else.

"Give us a look at it—one look," he burst out, forgetting the dark night.

The stranger said no more, but produced the Book and held it before Shaun's eyes. Now, though it was pitch dark, a sort of red, sulphurous, shifting light played around the wonderful volume, and the title glowed in letters of living fire—"The Book of all Knowledge and Fear."

In the glow that came from the Book Shaun Mahaffy's face showed hesitation, fear and overmastering desire. The face of the stranger was still in shadow.

You can have the Book from now till this time to-morrow night, and then I'll come for it, and remember, your promise."

When Shaun looked up from the Book, which had been placed in his hand, he saw that the stranger had disappeared, and he found himself there alone in the dark at the midnight hour, with that terrible Book whose fearsome title blazed into his life excited brain.

The situation would have overwhelmed a man of a different stamp of character; but Shaun's lust of knowledge was so great that it outweighed even his natural fears as well as his superstitious. Holding the book very lightly in his two hands, from him he hurried homeward, fear and doubt and desire lending wings to his feet.

When he arrived at the little cabin at the cross-roads, where he lived all alone, he laid the terrible Book upon a table, double-locked the door, and closed all the window-shutters. The fire on the hearth had long gone out, but he needed not to light his lamp, for the light from the fiery book filled the whole room, and every nook and corner, leaving never a shadow anywhere, as if it had the power of passing through everything.

Having secured himself from intrusion Shaun drew a chair to the table and opening the book commenced to pore over its contents with hungry eyes. In a short time he was so absorbed in it that he forgot everything else, even his own identity, for the things that he read of in that book were so wonderful as to claim all his attention.

And first he read of the secrets of the earth, and as he read he saw the treasures of its innermost recesses. He saw the great veins of gold and silver that could be touched by the hand of Him who had the power to lay thick where gems of precious value lay thick as the sea-shore pebbles, the hidden hoards of men long dead, of kings and princes in lavish piles of gems and coins and ingots, all this glory of wealth broke upon his astonished vision and he saw himself rich beyond all dreaming in the knowledge he was so eagerly devouring.

As he pored over the book the night hours flew by, yet he knew it not. The silver dawn showed on the hills and the chattering birds began their songs, and the white mist rolled from the green fields as the sun bearded his near approach with a phalanx of flashing spears. But his rays could not enter the closed cabin at the cross-roads, and its interior was still illuminated with the baleful glow of the Book of Fear.

Shaun Mahaffy still read on without raising his head. And now he read the secrets of Souls, and his own wicked spirit revealed therein like a glutton at a luculent feast, and in reading he saw the innermost thoughts of his fellow-men, men whom he knew—men alive and men dead. He saw all the sins they had committed, he saw the foulness of the souls of some who were esteemed virtuous by their fellowmen, and he exulted in the revelation.

And so he read on and paid no heed to time. And as he sat there in his guilty loneliness with that forbidden book the sun rose his full height in the light skies, the lark was soaring in the air, the angelus bell from the little church spoke out sweetly and solemnly, but neither light nor sound entered that solitary house.

The day passed hour by hour, the evening shades came down upon the brown hills, but the reader made no sign or move. He was reading now of all the evil knowledge possessed by those who make compact with the demons, how they take control of the soul of the creature of nature, become possessors of her hidden treasures and influence in any way they pleased the lives of their fellow mortals.

The second night fell dark and heavy outside, and still the evil fascination of the book held his hapless reader spell-bound. He forgot even the dreadful would turn over a leaf that crackled and rattled, flushing his unholy light on his haggard and ghastly features. The cold sweat dropped from his forehead, his mouth was opened wide and his eyes protruded with eagerness.

The early hours of the night slipped by as he had the others, and it was now drawing close to midnight. Outside, the wind was moaning dimly, with long-drawn cadences like the weird crooning of the Banshee. Suddenly by an irresistible impulse Shaun Mahaffy felt himself obliged to step in his reading and look up. From the raised his eyes a shock passed through him as though a red-hot brand had been pressed to his brow. At the other side of the table a stranger sat quietly, but intently regarding him. Shaun Mahaffy gibbered in mortal fear, and looked about him as if for means of escape, but as he did so again the glow of the book caught his eyes and he was enraptured. Once more he began to read, as if he had not been interrupted. And as he read the terrible stranger sat there watching him.

Once again by the same irresistible impulse he was compelled to look up from his task. This time he saw a look of mocking triumph in the eyes of his companion, upon the same dread filled his whole being. And now the stranger spoke.

"Shaun Mahaffy," he said with awful menace in his tones, "forget not our compact. It is now the time."

"Give me a year—a month—a week, but do not take me now," said Shaun Mahaffy, piteously. "I would read more from this book."

"It may not be," said the stranger. "Not even an hour can you have of respite. You can no longer live on earth with the knowledge of evil you have gained, but you are company worthy of the demons below and they demand your presence there."

"But I would read all—all—all!" screamed the demented Shaun.

"You shall, but not here," said the stranger, reaching across and closing the terrible book.

It shut with a hollow, deep-reverberating sound, the knell of doom for the soul of Shaun Mahaffy.

And as it shut the house was filled with darkness.

Next day when the people, knowing something had happened, burst in the door they found but the dead body of the old man. The face was black and distorted, and a terrible book was on it that those who saw could never afterwards forget. But the table before him a black mark was burned deeply. It was where the Book of Fear had rested. And the people seeing this crossed their foreheads with the holy sign, saying, "God between us and the power of a Hell," for they knew he had come to this end from reading bad books and scorning the words of the priest of God.

THE END.

THE QUIET HOUR.

A wide, rich heaven hangs above you, but it hangs high; a wide, rough world in around you, and it lies very low. It is remarkable with what Christian fortitude and resignation you can bear the sufferings of other people.—Dean Swift.

Recall to mind the heavier trials of others, than you may bear more lightly your own troubles.—Thomas a Kempis. Look not mournfully into the past—it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present—it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a manly heart.

"I said to myself, you have heavier troubles in store; but why should I anticipate? The worst troubles are those that never arise. And where's the use of preaching to a man with the toothache about the perils of typhoid fever?"

Shine forth, O Lord, as when on Thy nativity Thine angels visited the shepherds. Let Thy glory blossom forth as bloom and foliage on the trees. Change with Thy mighty power this visible world into that diviner world which, as yet, we see not. Destroy what we see that it may pass and be transformed into what we believe.—Cardinal Newman.

I pity the man who has never, in his best moment, felt his life consoled and comforted in its bitterness by the larger lives that he could look at and know that they too were men living in the same humanity with himself, only living in it much more largely. So much of our need of consolation comes from the bitterness of our life, its pettiness and its weariness insensibly transferring itself to all life, making us sceptical about anything great or worth living for in life at all. It is our rescue from this debilitating doubt that is the blessing which falls upon us when, leaving our own insignificant behind, we let our hearts rest with comfort on the mere fact that those men are of great, broad, generous, and healthy lives—men like the greatest that we know.

It is always a pleasant thing to have been at Mass; it sweetens and savours the whole day. It is indeed a wonderful thing, as we walk about, to think that "we have seen the Lord"—seen Him with our eyes, have actually been in His company, have stood within a few feet of Him! What a privilege to enjoy over ordinary men and women whom we pass by in the streets! No one, therefore, who can do it, should miss this evening of our Lord every day.

Now and again you see two women passing down the street who look like sisters. You are astonished to learn that



They are mother and daughter, and you realize that a woman at forty or forty-five ought to be at her sweet and fairest. Why isn't it so?

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continued day after day during life, it forms a strong habit of piety and a sure protection. It brings confidence and protection, and may be a stepping-stone to better things. We think of accidents and of sudden death with less apprehension, for we know that we are the humble friends of Almighty God—"we have seen the Lord."

A STRANGER IN HER NATIVE PLACE.

The Montreal Star tells this pathetic story—Some six weeks ago, as was duly chronicled in the Star at the time, Mrs. Margaret Hogan arrived in Montreal from Toronto, on her way to Londonberry, Ireland.

Mrs. Hogan is seventy-eight years of age, and sixty-five years ago she left her home and sailed for Canada. She has lived in this country ever since. On reaching Montreal Mrs. Hogan found that her steamer—the Lake Ontario, of the Beaver Line—had sailed at daybreak, a few hours before her arrival in the city. She was sent forward to her destination by the Dominion Line boat sailing the next Saturday, thus saving the delay of waiting for the next boat by the Beaver Line.

But disappointment awaited Mrs. Hogan when she reached Ireland. A tall tree with waving branches stood on the spot where the old homestead had been, and strange faces confronted her at every enquiry. Hogan? Hogan? No; nobody remembered any one named Hogan. Certainly they had not lived there within the memory of even those whose locks were now quite grey.

So Mrs. Hogan stayed a day or two about the old place, vainly trying to find anyone who knew her, or even remembered the family or the old home, and then she made her way to Londonderry, and applied to the steamship company to take her back to Canada again. She had hoped to spend the closing days of her life on the old sod, but existence was unbearable where she was not even remembered, and whence all the old familiar landmarks had disappeared.

Irish people are ever good-hearted and generous, and the homely peasants to whom she told her story pitied the old woman, and from their not too heavily laden purses freely raised a sum sufficient to enable her to open for a few days and enable her to open negotiations with the steamship company to take her back to Canada. The steamship people, too, were susceptible to the influence of sentiment; and so Mrs. Hogan found herself once more on the ocean, with the prow of the steamer headed for the Dominion.

She arrived in Montreal on Saturday last, and at once left over the Grand Trunk for Toronto.

THE POPE AND THE COPTIC CHURCH.

The London Times' correspondent at Alexandria, writing on July 23, says:—"Bishop Macarius was publicly enthroned on Friday, on his appointment by the Pope as Coptic Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria with the title of Cyril the Second, thus completing the relations between the Catholic Coptic Church and Rome, after an interruption of about seven centuries."

The See of the Patriarch of Alexandria extends over all Egypt and Abyssinia, but since the schism of Dioscorus in the fifth century, the Church has been divided, and the Catholic branch has dwindled until today it numbers only 25,000 in a total of 40,000 Copts. But it is showing elements of revival, possessing better educated clergy than the other branch, styled Orthodox, which disavows Papal jurisdiction.

There are now two Patriarchs of Alexandria, one appointed by the Pope, the other by the Coptic community of Egypt."

THE TRANSVAAL AND THE QUEEN'S SPEECH.

The Queen's speech at the prorogation of the Imperial Parliament contained the following reference to the Transvaal crisis:—"We have received a petition from a considerable number of my subjects residing in the South African republic, praying for assistance to obtain a removal of grievances and disabilities of which they complain. The position of my subjects in the South African republic is inconsistent with the promises of equal treatment, whereupon my grant of international independence to that republic was founded, and the unrest caused thereby is a constant source of danger to the peace and prosperity of my dominions in South Africa. Negotiations on this subject with the Government of the South African republic have been entered into, and are still proceeding."

REV. DR. KOLBE.

The Rev. Dr. Kolbe, whose powerful letter denouncing Mr. Chamberlain for directly aiming at a war with the Transvaal we printed last week, is one of the most eminent Catholic ecclesiastics under the Southern Cross. Dr. Kolbe is a member of a Dutch family who have been settled for upwards of two centuries in Cape Colony, and was brought up as a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. At the Cape University he won every honour and prize in the subjects of classics, mathematics, and mental science, outdistancing all competitors. His adoption of the Catholic faith and his ordination as a clergyman of the Catholic Church alienated many friendships and severed close family ties, but the sacrifice

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of so much for conscientious conviction endeared him to the public at large, and the Pope, in recognition of his high scholarship, conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Kolbe, who is in the prime of life, is rather above than below the medium height, with thick dark brown hair, and large, lustrous eyes, protected by spectacles. He has very pallid features, broad forehead, aquiline nose, and firmly-set mouth, indicative of determination of character. He is a very successful preacher and platform speaker, and charming in conversation and manners, although he suffers from the infirmity of deafness, which even with the aid of an ear trumpet renders oral communication with him somewhat difficult.

A BRAVE PRIEST. The Royal Niger Co. has presented to Father Rousselot, of the French Catholic Mission in Africa, a watch bearing an inscription:—"In recognition of his Christian heroism in remaining at the mission during the native rising at Isselle in the autumn of 1898." The horror excited by the butcheries of the King of Benin, in the form of sacrifices to Ju Ju, will be remembered by our readers. Pending details, which we are compelled through want of space to hold over till next issue, we may say that after the capture of Benin by the English, a local society—the Rousselot went to meet the raiders, and turned its attention to Isselle. Father Rousselot went to meet the raiders, and by his fearlessness absolutely cowed them, so that they left without injuring anything. An English (Protestant) officer who was there at the time said:—"Father Rousselot is as plucky a man as they make 'em."

LORD KELVIN.

Lord Kelvin, an Irishman, whose retirement from the Chair of Natural Philosophy in Glasgow University we announced, is in his seventy-sixth year, and by far the most distinguished mathematician and physicist of his day. Three years ago he celebrated his jubilee as an English (Protestant) officer who was there at the time said:—"Father Rousselot is as plucky a man as they make 'em."

ALTERED TIMES.

From the Cornhill Magazine. It was in Malta harbour on a sultry day that a four-foot-eight midgetman came to join his first sea-going ship. Having duly reported himself to the captain—an officer of some six feet two inches—the latter, literally looking down upon the boy, said:—"Well, youngster, so you've come to join, eh?"

"Yes, if you please, sir," meekly responded the midgetman.

"What is it—same old yarn, sent the fool of the family to sea, eh?"

"No, sir," intemperately replied the youngster; "oh, no; things have altered since your time, sir."

"Go away," roared the captain, and the midget flew below as fast as his little legs could carry him.

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