

THE SIN OF PRIVATE REGAN.

BY JOHN KEVIN MAGNER.

"To do a great right, do a little wrong. And curb this cruel devil of his will."

The dying man was picking feverishly at the counterpane, and murmuring fragments of the old Celtic prayers which have been handed down in Ireland from the dim dawn of its Catholicity. Ever and anon he would lapse into English, but then his broken words and interjections told rather of the stirring life of camp and field than of the dread presence into which he was slowly but surely passing.

Presently a gleam of consciousness shone in the overbright, sunken eyes. "Biddy, darlint, is Father Nolan here?"

A weeping figure rose from a corner of the death-chamber and passed out through the open door-way. Soon she returned with the good priest, who had been waiting below for this lucid interval of the dying man.

"Do you know me, Phil?" were his test-words as he placed round his neck the narrow purple stole of his ministry.

"Aye! why should I not know you, Father Nolan, dear? Leave the room neighbors, kindly, while poor old Phil Regan puts himself straight with God."

And as the priest sat down by the bedside, laying his hand tenderly on the dying man's brow, we passed silently out of the room.

We sat and waited in the little room beneath the bedchamber where the poor fellow whom some of us remembered as a dashing sergeant of the—there was mustering for the last great roll-call. Half an hour passed in silence, broken only by a low murmuring heard at intervals from the upper room, and by the broken sobbing of the widow that was soon to be.

Then we heard hurried footsteps on the stairs, and the priest, crucifix in hand, burst into the room.

"The change has come," he said. "He has had time to make a good confession and to receive the Holy Viaticum, but now he is sinking very fast."

The wife had best come up at once. Poor Mrs. Regan, controlling her great grief, went bravely up the little stairway, and we, the few old friends of the dying man, followed reverently after.

The change had, indeed, come. The eyes were sunken deeper in their orbits, and were growing duller and more vacant as the moments sped. Reason had fled, and the dying man now gazed listlessly at the priest by the bedside.

Father Nolan pressed his finger gently on the wasted wrist.

"He is dying fast," he whispered. "Do not weep, Mrs. Regan, it is best thus. He has fought the good fight, and is now but hastening to receive from the great Captain the eternal reward. But come forward and say some little prayers in his ear while he is passing away. My work is done, and I must go elsewhere. Good-night, and may God bless you all."

So saying, the good priest departed to help some other way-worn soul to cast its moorings with this weary world and to look out bravely, aye, and gladly, on that last voyage which we must all of us one day make, trusting our little all to "the Spirit which broodeth over the waters."

The wife sank on her knees by the side of the bed and began the Rosary. But poor human nature asserted itself. She hungered for one word of recognition, of love and tenderness, from her dying mate.

"Phil, darlint," she broke out in the middle of an Ave, "don't you know your poor old Biddy?"

The dying man looked up at the sound of a voice well known even when faintly heard through the dark mists of delirium. But the poor dazed eyes failed to do their duty. He passed his gaunt hand over them twice or thrice, then let it fall heavily on the coverlet, where it was taken in the jealous clasp of his wife's loving fingers. Presently we heard him murmuring querulously in a strange, far-away voice:

"You'll be one o' the kind neighbors' wives maybe. There's a mist over the rice-field, an' the smoke hangs heavy. I don't know you."

She raised her voice in bitter lamentation.

"Ualane! ualane!" she cried. "O, alanna, but you must know me before you die. Oh, say the wan word to me."

At the sound of her voice he again looked up. Then a terrible change flashed over the poor white face.

"God! God!" he shrieked. "I do know you. 'Tis the Colonel's wife, an' she's come for my soul. Oh neighbors, neighbors, take her away! I did not want, I did not want to kill the dear lady that was always so good to the boys, always so kind to me. Oh God, God!"

But his wife stood over him, holding up the crucifix which had hung at the head of the bed. "Look on this, Phil Regan," she said very quietly, "an' think no more of a sin, if it was a sin, that has been washed away in tears of thine an' bitter repentance this many a day."

The white, terror-stricken face grew suddenly peaceful, and a beautifully calm light shone in the sunken eyes.

"Biddy darlint," he said, "that was ever an' always the good wife to me, kiss me now before I die." She pressed her lips to his again and again.

"And now, dear old woman and dear, kind neighbors, good-night. Thank God, I'm not afraid to die. Into Thy hands—"

The features relaxed, and the marble beauty of a peaceful death stole over

the dead man's face. We closed the white eyelids, and led the widow out of the death-presence, while two good women remained to lay out with decency and reverence the mortal remains of Philip Regan.

"Neighbors," she said, when her first great burst of grief was over. "I knew that that awful thought o' despair wud come at the last, but thank God, O, thank God (and she clasped her hands and looked fervently upward), I was ready. An' now, in justice to the dear, good man that's gone, I must tell you what it was that troubled his dyin' soul, though it's sad an' sore I am to be reapi'n' up the dreadful deeds o' the Black Year. An' in this hour too—"

Her voice faltered, and she burst into tears. But soon, as though borne up by some sense of duty unfulfilled, she continued almost calmly: "He was a privit thin. We wor just married, an' the old regiment was drafted, an' we wid it, to the Injun mutiny. The Colonel came from our part, an' very kind he was to Phil an' me an' made Phil his orderly. But it's the Colonel's wife that was the kindest, dearest lady that ever lived, an' may God give rest to her darlin' soul, and curse for ever an' for ever the black devils that brought her to her end, for no, no, it wasn't, it cudn't ha' been the fault o' my poor Philleen that worshipped the very ground her dear feet had staid on."

"The regiment was ordered out o' camp wan day to join wid wan o' Havelock's brigades in a battle at the beginning o' the black business; an' as they judged that every Sepoy that cut a hairy a gun was miles an' miles away fighting wid General Havelock, they left the women an' childer wid a small guard only. I'll make a short story of it, neighbors, for his weak an' tired I am, an' it's a story I wudn't be telling but for the sake of him that's gone. An' so I won't say what we poor women suffered that day, an' how the poor boys that was left wid us fought like lions in the murderin' heat against the swarm o' black demons that dropped down on us from God alone knows where. But when the Colonel come back in the cool o' the evenin' wid what was left o' the regiment, the last o' the poor boys was down, an' high up on a little hill that was in the middle o' camp he saw a sight that made his blood run cold. It was a beautiful woman rallyin' round the Colonel's beautiful wife, fightin' like she devils wid the empty muskets o' the poor dead boys."

"The Colonel stud like wan in a dream till he saw her strugglin' in the arms o' the wicked black demons. Then he leapt out before the min an' 'Give me a rifle,' says he, in a voice like thunder, that even we cud hear right away in the camp. 'God! I cannot do it,' he head swims 'sez he, taking it from his shoulder. 'A thousand rupees to the man who shoots her dead,' sez he darlin' Nellie, sez he, sobbin' like a child. An' a fierce yell went up from the regiment, an' my Phil he sez: 'For God's sake, Colonel, spake the word, an' we'll save her yet an' send home to the burnin' flames of hell every devil that's there o' them!'"

"Fool," sez the Colonel like a madman, 'shoot like a man or die like a dog!' an' he raised his sword over him. Then he lowered it, ashamed like, an' sez piteously: 'Forgive me, Regan, but don't you see that if we stir hand or foot they'll be off to the hills wid her an' no stoppin' thin, and then— Oh God help me, God help me!'"

So at last, wid beggin' and implorin', twelve o' the men stud in a row, each man lookin' at the other ashamed and sick; and the Colonel sez: 'Fire!' an' 'Oh Nelly!' sez he, an' the poor dear angel dropped with a ball through her beautiful brow."

An' neighbors, when they got into the cursed camp, an' Phil wint trimblin' an' examined the dead lovely face, he knew from the smallness o' the wound that it was his ball did the deed. For his rifle was one o' the Colonel's, smaller in bore than the other min's. Oh! bitter, bitter was his grief, an' sad an' long an' thrue his repentance. An' I know that God has forgiven it him this blessed night."

And God had forgiven it, if there be truth in the augury of a dead face. For when, before withdrawing, we went up into the death-presence, the old soldier's face smiled sweetly and peacefully upon us, as with a light from beyond the tomb.

The Why and Wherefore.

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EMMET REPLIES

To Lord Salisbury's Speech on "The American Irish."

Lord Salisbury's tirade against Irish-Americans has called forth an interesting letter from Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, the president of the Irish National Federation of America. No man is better qualified than the author of this letter to express the convictions and the wishes of the great majority of Irish-Americans with regard to the future relations of Ireland and Great Britain, or to forecast the treatment of the Protestants of Ulster at the hands of their Catholic fellow countrymen.

Dr. Emmet believes that the Irish people, as a whole, can be fully conciliated and made to prosper and live in unity and contentment as subjects of the British Crown. To that end it is useful only that the English Government should recognize the urgent necessity for granting in the near future to Ireland the management of her own affairs, together with a fair representation in an Imperial Parliament. In Dr. Emmet's judgment all the inhabitants of Ireland, with the exception of certain Anglo-Irish landlords, and of the Orangemen, who constitute but an insignificant minority, are willing to accept in good faith the Home Rule Bill lately carried by Mr. Gladstone through the House of Commons. That measure would be accepted by the thinking portion of the Irish race, on both sides of the Atlantic, as the best expedient attainable for preserving the Irish nationality, language, literature and traditions. Such a concession would be accounted a full and final quitance for all claims, past, present and future, and it remains for Englishmen to say whether the concession shall be withheld.

The author of this letter repudiates the charge that there has been any interference on the part of Irish-Americans with the aims and methods of the Irish Nationalist members of parliament. Not a single suggestion, he says, has been made, beyond pointing out the necessity of union among the Nationalist leaders and of submission to the will of the majority. The terms of the Home Rule Bill, and the mode of passing it, have been left unreservedly to the representatives of Ireland at Westminster. The friends of Ireland in the United States have confined themselves exclusively to raising the money needed for the constitutional agitation undertaken by the Irish Nationalists and carried by them to the verge of victory. The legitimacy of such money contributions will be disputed by no one who bears in mind that most of the Nationalist members of parliament are poor men, that they receive no salary, and have to bear the heavy election expenses imposed by statute.

Dr. Emmet dismisses as ridiculous Lord Salisbury's pretended apprehension that the bestowal of Home Rule on Ireland would result in an assumption of complete control over Irish affairs by Irish-American politicians. The President of the Irish National Federation of America must be thoroughly conversant with the sources whence contributions to the Home Rule cause have been derived, and he declares that collections have been made almost exclusively from laboring men, trades people, and members of the learned professions. Dr. Emmet adds that the more an Irish leader, whether Democrat or Republican, has become identified with American politics, the less interest has he seemed to feel in the cause of his native land. So far as the experience of the author of this letter goes—and it has been extensive—there is absolutely no ground for the fear expressed by the Tory chief, that Irish-American politicians would seize the lever of Irish Home Rule to unsettle British commerce, and to command the trade routes and threaten the seaports of Great Britain.

Lord Salisbury's assumption that the Catholic majority of the Irish population would be guilty of religious intolerance under a Home Rule regime is likewise denounced as absurd. Dr. Emmet challenges the citation of a single authentic instance of Catholic intolerance in Ireland during the last two hundred years. He does not hesitate to assert that the only religious disturbances which have occurred during that period have emanated, directly or indirectly, from Orangemen. In the southern and western sections of Ireland, where the proportion of Catholics to Protestants has been for the most part as four to one, Catholics, since their emancipation, have returned fewer of their co-religionists than of Protestants to Parliament. On the other hand, such a thing as the return of a Catholic from any of those Ulster constituencies which are dominated by Orangemen was never heard of. In a word, the only enemies to Ireland's future peace and prosperity are the Orangemen, the sole motive for whose existence is to breed discord under the cloak of religion.

Dr. Emmet closes his remarkable letter with the declaration of his belief that, under the existing circumstances, provided, of course, these are ameliorated by the concession of Home Rule, it is best for Ireland to remain a part of the British empire. Such a connection would, at all events, he thinks, be preferable to the acceptance of complete independence in her present state.

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AT ST. PETER'S IN ROME.

A New England Protestant Girl Witnesses a Ceremony.

The following is a letter written by a New England Protestant girl to friends in New York city descriptive of a great ceremony which took place in Rome on April 15.

Rome, April 17.—Yesterday was a red-letter day, one of the most impressive of my life. The occasion was the beatification of St. John of Avila, and the services were remarkable, even in Rome, for it is the first beatification which has taken place in St. Peter's for twenty years, and only once before in that time has the choir been illuminated.

We went by 8 o'clock to St. Peter's, and even then hundreds of people had come, though they seemed nothing in that vast space. The choir and nave were covered with red brocade and gold, while millions of candles gleamed from lofty roof to altar of the vast nave; the light was diffused in a sort of golden glow unlike anything you ever saw. All along were built tribunals covered with red drapery for different orders of nobles, prelates, pilgrims and spectators. Ever the floor was divided into numbered pews, so there could be no crowding, since guards in their gray uniforms (designed by Michael Angelo) stood guard at every corner. Through the broad aisles wider than Broadway, where the procession was to pass, walked the Pope's chamberlains in their Van Dyke costumes of black satin and velvet, their breasts and necks hung with jewelled orders. They are 'princes of every Catholic nation in Europe, who serve by courses.'

We had arrived in time to watch the people come in—Spanish pilgrims, monks in every sort of dress, strangers of every nation struggling for places, kneeling at the tomb of St. Peter, or bowing before his statue dressed in gorgeous GOLD AND SILVER VESTMENTS, and mire fairly blazing with jewels. The emerald in his finger ring is nearly an inch square. No royal treasury in Europe contains such gems as the sacristy of St. Peter's.

Our places were in the balcony, just above the great statue of St. Longinus, about one third of the way up the dome. We were too far away to see the faces of the people, but the ensemble was magnificent beyond words to tell. Oh, how can I make you see that mighty interior, where distances are forgotten! All is so vast. The presence of 4000 persons does not make much impression.

The morning service and procession were very fine—good music, gorgeous color, splendid array of Cardinals in rich robes. The celebrant, Cardinal Rampolla (Leo Vannucci), who may be next Pope, was especially picturesque in cloth of silver embroidered in gold.

Mass, during which the saint's picture was unveiled, lasted from 9 to 12. It would have been matchless, if one had not been to the evening service and seen the Pope. One of our seats was separated from the other three in the afternoon, so mamma went alone, sending me with our friends. She was very near the Pope and saw his face well, which I didn't, so I can only tell you of the whole ceremony as I watched it from an exry commanding full view of the choir and transept, and a piece of the nave. Though we arrived at 3:30, dressed as in the morning, the loggia was already well filled with Italian and French princesses, who were the only other occupants. The procession was not due until 5:30, so we chatted with our neighbors and watched the crowd below. It was

WONDERFULLY IMPRESSIVE—women with veiled heads, men in evening dress or court costumes and orders, monks in black, white, scarlet or brown; nuns more soberly clad, but with queer winged head dresses; the stately chamberlains like ghosts of old portraits; Spanish pilgrims in broad hats, curious strangers gathered by the great scene. From mosaic pavement to lofty dome the million lights glowed yellow against the faded crimson and gold rich and warm, but softened by age; the hum of that sea of lips reached us faintly; though we could feel the suppressed eagerness and intense waiting for one who is the representative of Christ on earth—an able statement or a truly saintly old man, according to the spectators' state of mind.

Two hours passed slowly but not wearily away; the place is too absorbing in beauty and in memories for that. Then there was a still in the crowd, a whisper, a thrill, and from the great multitude rose a mighty shout that rolled from chapel to chapel, echoed in the great dome, and rang out again, again and again. It seemed ages, but it was only ten minutes, before the beginning of the procession came into view. First walked, two by two, two hundred altar boys; then a long line of men, legions in purple, lace and gray fur capes; then more in white fur; then scarlet silk Cardinals with suties; then a detachment of the Swiss Guard, a band of chamberlains, and then, in his great chair borne on the shoulders of his men, with the large ostrich fans waving over him just as you so often see in pictures, CAME LEO XIII.

The tall, spare figure was covered with folds of white and an ermine and crimson velvet cape; a tiny white skull cap was on his head, and the delicate, upraised hand, fragile as a woman's, was partly concealed by a silk mitt and the huge ring, which seemed to weigh it down. As the chair moved slowly along, with frequent pauses, he raised himself by one

arm and stood to send the blessing further among the crowd, now mad with excitement. From the moment he appeared until the service was well commenced not a sound but that of cheers could be heard. Men and women, Protestant, pagan, or Catholic, all united in homage. Cheers, clapping, handkerchiefs were not enough; the dome rang again and again with the shouts of "E vive il Papa Re!" (Long live the Pope King.)

The crowd would not be silent; it was crazed. I never felt such a whirl of emotion. Men and women wept, shouted and knelt; the guards and priests tried to still the tumult, for the Pope was kneeling at the altar, but in vain. Not all excitable Italians, but strangers from every nation, joined and swelled the applause. When you consider that this took place in a church revered by the whole world, by a throng of people of every nation and religion, and was offered to a dethroned prince, feeble and old, and in the face of Italian spies and officers, then you must confess that it was a remarkable demonstration and that no other living being could have evoked it.

The Pope's presence and personality are very touching and impressive; every one who sees him speaks of his heavenly smile, and the gentle, yet stately, fatherliness of his manner. The magnetism of his presence ran through the great throng, reached us, until we cried and waved, with tears running down our cheeks.

The great chair was lowered, and among his Cardinals and attendants the Pope knelt, and the choir, led by MORISCHES' ANGELIC SOPRANO, began the Te Deum. Twice during the service of a half hour he rose bowed and knelt, but only once was his voice heard, when he gave the benediction. It was the one moment when all was still, and the words rang out low, rich and deep, though wavering. Then the triumph was repeated as he was borne out and disappeared.

I could only make you see it; but you will think this exaggerated, and I have not hinted faintly at the beauty of church and vestments and lights, the mad enthusiasm, and that beautiful man, whose holy calm was the one quiet spot amid that wild excitement; only such a day is a great experience even to a New England girl and one of Dr. Parkhurst's flock.

The last two weeks have taught me the greatness, the power and the beauty of much which the Catholic Church offers, and I am glad for the broadening and widening experience. It is only by closer comprehension and sympathy between all hearts and minds that the old world is to grow better and truer in years to come. G. B. G.

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Father Nolan pressed his finger gently on the wasted wrist.

"He is dying fast," he whispered. "Do not weep, Mrs. Regan, it is best thus. He has fought the good fight, and is now but hastening to receive from the great Captain the eternal reward. But come forward and say some little prayers in his ear while he is passing away. My work is done, and I must go elsewhere. Good-night, and may God bless you all."

So saying, the good priest departed to help some other way-worn soul to cast its moorings with this weary world and to look out bravely, aye, and gladly, on that last voyage which we must all of us one day make, trusting our little all to "the Spirit which broodeth over the waters."