



# CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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## AN ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

A NARRATIVE OF REAL LIFE.

### CHAPTER V.

The Bishop admired the sound and humane views of O'Connell, but had not the remotest faith in their ever being sanctioned by a British legislature; and as the pressing wants of the poor called for immediate relief, charity, he said, imperatively demanded the introduction of the poor laws. As there was no chance of the parties agreeing, the debate was discontinued, and the conversation became general.

The evening passed on in that delightful manner, which might be expected when two such spirits were the chief contributors to the intellectual treat. I felt that I had enjoyed a privilege never, perhaps, to be expected again, and it was with no slight depression of spirits that I parted from the most eminent characters my dear old country could boast. Alas! we never shall look upon their like again.

Having finished my business in Dublin, I made arrangements to return to that plan, which, in despite of my first intentions, I would hereafter be forced to acknowledge publicly as my own.—Father O'Donovan was delighted at the prospect of once more greeting his beloved flock, but felt rather disappointed at my 'stupid dislike' to every species of notoriety, and was half inclined to quarrel with my determination to steal a march upon the warm-hearted people at home. I maintained my point, however, and was again quietly lodged in 'the stranger's room' in the good old priest's humble dwelling, before it was generally known that I had left Dublin.

The time allotted for my sojourn in Ireland had now nearly expired, and I began to yearn for a return to the bosom of my dear family. Yet, though mercantile affairs no longer occupied my thoughts, I had still much business to transact; my solicitor and nominal land-agent (for Father Edward was my *bona fide* representative) was to follow me to my estate in the course of a few days. In the interim, availing myself of my cousin's local and practical knowledge, I made myself acquainted, personally with every person who held a farm under me; learned his habits, condition, and probable prospects, and was, therefore, prepared to meet and consider the suggestions of my agent, or any other whose judgment I might rely, for improving the property and securing the interests of the cultivators of the land.

On my first day's experience among them, I had promised those who so kindly welcomed me, that I should afford them an opportunity of meeting me publicly once more before my departure. Accordingly, I requested Father O'Donovan and Father Edward to notify to the congregation that I wished their attendance in the chapel immediately after Divine service on the ensuing Sunday, as there were matters of importance to be communicated to them. When the hour arrived there was found indeed a full attendance. In pursuance of the plan laid down by the Reverend gentleman and myself, Father Edward opened the proceedings in a short address, announcing the relation in which I had stood to them for several years, and concluded by requesting that they would all listen to what should be said, without returning any mark of feeling whatever.

'In addition,' said he, 'to the strongest argument I can give for this course, which is the reverence due the Lord's Day, your landlord makes it a special request, and I am sure you will oblige him.'

Father O'Donovan then rose, and said: 'My friends—my very dear children—With conflicting emotions I venture to address you.—At our last meeting my heart was joyful beyond measure. Alas, for poor tempest-tossed humanity, my soul to-day is sunk in gloom! And why is this? Our benefactor—your landlord—our more than father—has just made himself known to us—has taught us to feel his value—has appeared like a rainbow among us; and when our hearts were full of gratitude and love, fate comes to snatch him from you. I hope only for a time—but from me—from me—for ever!'

The old man's tears poured in torrents down his furrowed cheeks, and his congregation, in silent agony, sympathized with his sufferings.—Neither Father Edward, nor myself, were able to conceal our emotions; at length he recovered nerve, and proceeded:

'I am a foolish old man, but you will know how to forgive me; you have long and kindly borne with my weakness; and yet I would not exchange my present feelings for all the boasted and vain philosophy of the ancient sages. Well, your landlord (but there is so much of the Yankee about him that he abhors to hear that word) to please him then, I say, your friend is about to leave you for a time—a short time only, if Heaven permit. He will return to you, my children, and that as soon as the necessary arrangements for the disposition of his property can be made; he will end his days among you; he will be a

blessing to you all, and to more than you. I have further to inform you that, in the course of a few days, the agent is to be here to make all final arrangements. The mansion house (he won't let us call it the castle) already in sound repair, will be fitted up for his residence, and then!—but I can't stay till then—God's best blessing be about you all. But what name shall we give to the old castle? It once well deserved the name of 'Castle-rack-rent,' but that won't do now. Well, I baptize it 'Mercy's Seat,' and of the fitness of the name you will be satisfied when you see your leases, which are filled and signed, and will be delivered to you on the arrival of the agent. Let me tell you at once, that every man who holds a fur of land upon the estate, is at this moment a freholder—that he holds his property in perpetuity, or in other words, 'while grass grows and water runs.' Well, this is a trying day to me; may the goodness of Him, who has borne with my unworthiness so long extend His mercy, and bear me out. My dear children, my kind and virtuous flock, your poor old broken down pastor, who has labored so long among you, is no longer your parish priest. In compliance with my saintly Bishop's orders, I have this day to induct my successor. I will not harrow up your feelings by keeping you in suspense. Come forward, Father Edward Cahill. Behold my people—behold your future parish priest. I need say no more; you know him well, and he knows you. Be humble, my people; be humble, my son; work in harmony; authority belongs to the priest, obedience to the people; but the Church, in justice, rules both. I am exhausted; but I must add, this appointment has taken place at my own solicitation, and that I am to remain with you till you bear me to my last resting-place in the vault beneath the chapel.—Now God bless you all; I give you to your benefactor.'

There was a deep gloom marked on every countenance, and unfeigned sorrow rankling in every heart. Father O'Donovan was indeed exhausted; every eye beheld his weakness. I wished him to retire, but he would not.

'No, my son,' said he, 'I feel it is the closing scene, and I will not make my exit before the curtain drops; proceed with what you have to say. Speak cheerfully to my people; it will gladden, perhaps re-animate my fainting spirit.'

Acting upon the hint, I proceeded, and endeavored to arouse whatever energy was left me.

'My dear friends,' said I, 'the stillness of sorrow has naturally settled down upon you, and yet there is no just cause; the change which has been made exists only in name, not in reality. You still have your two beloved pastors to think for you, and to labor for you. A burthen has been removed from the shoulders of your ancient Father, and placed on those of his young coadjutor, and this is all. With regard to myself and you, I have but few words to say; I have done what Father O'Donovan has told you; I will only add that, by giving you perpetuities of your farms, I have put it out of the power of my heirs, or a heartless agent, to harass you or your heirs in any shape or form. Under the kind and wise management of Father Edward, you have risen to comparative comfort. You found the rent not too high; but to secure your future progress and improvement I have reduced that rent twenty-five per cent., and have empowered your priest to meet any emergency that may arise.—Sobriety, order, industry, religious habits, I claim from you in return. These virtues will always secure my friendship. I only add, my rent-roll affords me abundant interest for my outlay on the property; so that in having promoted your welfare I have also secured my own interest. I have now to ask a favor—I wish all the heads of houses, male and female, to join me at dinner in the hotel on Thursday next, when I will present you the leases. For the young members of each family, an entertainment will be provided on the same evening, and we, the elders, will forget the cares of the world, and partake of the enjoyment. I shall then bid you adieu.'

A few words from Father Edward, and the congregation withdrew in silence. The drooping heart of Father O'Donovan revived, and we spent a cheerful evening. My uncle, sisters, and brothers-in-law, claimed and had my best attention. Their foresight and industry had rendered them independent of the world, and for themselves they sought no exclusive mark of favor. They were happy in their state of life, and I did not attempt, by lessening their self-dependence, to upset a course of action productive of so much good. I resolved, however, to provide for any member of their families who might desire to turn their minds to mercantile pursuits, whether in their native land or in a foreign country.

My solicitor arrived next day. All our arrangements were soon completed, and we were fully prepared to meet the dinner party at the appointed time. Father O'Donovan continued weak, but gay in spirit. On Thursday morning he said Mass for us, and administered the Holy

Sacrament to several communicants. When the dinner-hour arrived, we all repaired to the hotel. I wished the good old priest to preside, but he would not.

'No, no, my son,' said he, 'I will take your right hand and say grace for you, but no more residing for me in this world.'

There was something singular, I thought, in his tone and manner, but taking the chair I soon forgot all about it in the discharge of my duties. Father Edward, as croupier, contributed much to the hilarity of the house, and my agent, sinking the dignity of the professional man, took his part with much good nature in the rural festivities. Total abstinence from spirituous beverages was observed by the great majority of the party, and with pleasure I remarked that sobriety not only controlled coarse, noisy mirth, but contributed more than any other element to true cheerfulness. Father O'Donovan enjoyed himself. After the cloth was removed, and the standing toasts discharged, I proposed the health of the good old priest. In my preparatory remarks, I took occasion to allude to our early connection in our different characters of penitent and director, and honestly mentioned the influence which his wise counsel exercised over my actions in my varied and bustling career. He rose to reply, and I rejoiced to think that his energies and playful humor had returned.

'My good friends,' said he, 'your hospitable entertainer would make it appear that, in my early days, I was all piety and perfection in personal practice, and a very Solomon in the confessional. Don't take his word for it. You all know he's a partial witness, and what's more, you all know that in youth and in age, as he himself said to O'Connell, 'I was no better than I should be.' But passing that by, I will thank you for the kind manner in which you have drunk my health and beg of the chairman permission to give a toast; and, before I say another word, I require you to fill your glasses to the very brim, and remember, boys, *sky-larking* won't pass; it must be a bumper. Well, then, I am about to give you the health of a man, who in boyhood was a saint, for he was trained in true humility by his father and mother, who were indeed saints on earth, and are saints in heaven; and they reached that bright abode by the royal and infallible road of suffering. But the boy fell from his duty by one act of disobedience, and terrible were the consequences to himself and his parents—remorse was his constant companion, though deep penitence had stepped in to soothe the poisoned wound. God, in a most wonderful manner, heaped earthly favors on him, but he neither forgot his early and his only crime, nor the bountiful hand which showered honors and riches upon him. He rightly judged that he was only a steward over treasure entrusted to his dispensation, and the poor and the needy fed upon his bounty. Under his munificence, the temples of religion, and schools for disseminating Christian education, sprung up, in grateful thanksgiving, and whole districts, rescued from idleness and want, told the tale of his benevolence; yet, strange to say, the earthly author of all these blessings was himself greatly miserable. He had deeply sinned. True contrition visited his heart. In his judgment he felt that mercy and pardon were vouchsafed to him, but the sting of a morbid conscience remained, and his melancholy spirit sometimes read, in his Creator's mercy, the marks of his own reprobation. He attentively perused the Scriptures, and sedulously studied the lives of the Saints; but he thought, because sufferings were not assigned to him, that salvation must ultimately be refused. He forgot that there are many separate roads to Heaven. He overlooked the fact that love, deep reverential love, leads to bliss as surely as does martyrdom. He forgot the trouble our Saviour paid to love, in the person of Mary Magdalen. He forgot that love procured for St. John the high privilege of leaning familiarity on the very breast of the Loving Jesus. But he is cured of this morbid sensibility that—as an acrid humor destroys the health of the body—corroded and eat away the peace of his soul. Without further observation, I shall give you the health of our host, and I think he will admit that I have pretty fairly turned the tables on him.'

The toast was drunk with rapturous applause, and Father O'Donovan sat down, enjoying the scene. I returned thanks in a few words, and had scarcely taken my seat, when my uncle, who sat on the right of his venerated pastor, treated my attention; on turning round, I found him supporting the head of the aged priest, who seemed to have sunk in some kind of fit. The circumstance attracted the attention of the whole party, and Father Edward was instantly at my side. He took the wrist of his old friend, examined his pulse for a moment, and then, with a look that boded the worst, had him conveyed from the dining room. The fresh air and a glass of water partially restored animation, but it was clear he had overtaxed his decayed energies, and that his life quivered in the balance. We had

him removed to his own dwelling, where we hoped a little peace would revive him.

I returned to the party, simply to explain the necessity of suspending the festivities until the state of our loved Father's health might permit us to resume them. But they were not to be resumed. Father O'Donovan sunk rapidly; he clearly understood his own case, and earnestly solicited from his young successor the closing rites of the Church. His wish was complied with, and before the last rays of the setting sun had sunk beneath the horizon, the enfranchised spirit of our dear and venerated pastor stood at the bar of Eternal Justice. I shall not attempt to describe the sensation his death occasioned; those who know the value of an amiable, zealous, and spotless priest, can readily fancy it. His obsequies were performed by his venerable Bishop, attended by a numerous body of priests, and with loneliness of soul I saw his remains quietly interred in the sepulchre designed for himself and his successors. Many a prayer from simple, honest lips, and many a time has the atoning sacrifice been offered up for the repose of his soul.

The death of my old friend hastened my departure. Leaving everything to be regulated by my cousin and uncle, I privately departed for Dublin, took shipping for New York, and, after a happy voyage, landed safely upon the shore of mighty Columbia. I joined my family, found everything to my mind, and in due time explained my views. My two eldest sons chose to remain and continue my mercantile concerns. My nephew, a Cahill also, was assigned a partnership, and on his talents and experience I placed the fullest reliance. It required two years to make the necessary arrangements. My sons, by that time, had become clever men of business; my oldest daughter married a man, whom a parent might proudly choose for the protector of his child. My two younger daughters, and my youngest son, accompanied their mother and myself to the Green Isle; my girls afterwards chose a conventual life, and they are now happily removed from the snares of the world. My sons in America continue to prosper, and my wife, my youngest son, and myself, still endeavor, I hope, in all humility, to make the best atonement in our power for—*An Act of Disobedience.*

THE END.

## THE MOORISH DOCTOR'S PARCHMENT.

(From the Catholic Herald and Visitor.)

Speaking of the inns of Spain, a traveller has said that they 'are a species of shelter, where certain men entitled landlords furnish you with smoke and vermin for a night!' Another has added, that, in the hostels of the country of the Cid, 'it is not the host who feeds the traveller, but the traveller who feeds the host!' And a contemporary writer puts it in print that strangers who travel through the eastern provinces of the Iberian peninsula, should carry their beds with them, if they would not lie in sheets sewed for good and all over greasy woolen mattresses, and changed but once a year.

Whichever of these observations may require verification, it is yet certain that the Spanish inns of our day far excel those of two centuries ago. At that period, in fact, they were but a kind of caravanserais, frequented by muleteers, who found in them bedding for themselves and their beasts. The most comfortable, besides the stable and the public hall, had only a garret partitioned into many compartments dignified with the name of chambers, and to which access was gained by a ladder.

Now, it was into one of these chambers that there happened to come a certain Don Jose de Fuez d'Alcantra, accepted Doctor at Salamanca. A *hidalgo* in his quality of an Asturian, he yet possessed nothing in the world but the coat on his back, a score of *reals*, and a passable opinion of his own merits.

Though but little past thirty, he had already tried a variety of occupations, without finding in any that opulence which he declared, was as necessary to him as to any one else; and he was now returning to Leon in the hope of obtaining employment with the Count Don Alonzo Mendos, who owned a magnificent domain, to which our Doctor had already paid a visit, and which was on the road between Toro and Zamora.—Unhappily, the first question he addressed the innkeeper, put him in possession of the knowledge that the Count was dead, and he was still burdened with the surprise and disappointment caused by this intelligence, at the time when our story begins.

'Don Alonzo dead!' he repeated in a tone of stupefaction.

'And buried,' added the innkeeper, 'magnificently buried, as became a man of his rank.'

'But the chateau—is it occupied by his heirs?'

'The only heir was the Count's nephew, and he has directed Perez Cavallos, the notary of

Argelles, to offer the domain for sale, and, if I am not mistaken, it is to be handed over to a new proprietor to-morrow.'

Jose reflected that, from the very nature of things, this new proprietor would require agents, at good salaries, to manage his estate, and that, perhaps, in that case, he would be able to make his own services acceptable. So, after a moment of deep thought, he made known his intention of putting up at the inn until the day on which the new proprietor, that was to be, should come into possession.

Of this determination his host warmly approved, assuring him that he would nowhere find better cookery or better accommodations; and he supported this assertion by calling to our Doctor's attention all the conveniences of the chamber that had been allotted to him.

This chamber, in truth, was all the better aired from the simple circumstance that, of the four panes originally in the window, three were now wanting. As the window-frame had been let into the roof, the view therefrom of the illimitable sky was more extensive than varied. As for the furniture, it was composed solely of a wooden bedstead, covered with a straw mattress, a rickety stool, and a shaky table; but the open spaces between the different parts of the framework of the house, formed, as the landlord bade him remark, a multitude of compartments which advantageously supplied the place of drawers and trunks.

Most of these nooks were stuffed with soiled rags, earthen jars, glass phials, or, what occasioned Don Jose no little surprise, with books and manuscripts. The host acknowledged that this rubbish, as he termed the books and manuscripts, had been left with him by an old doctor, who had occupied the chamber for several months, busied, meanwhile, in study, in making distillations from herbs, and in writing. But certain circumstances having excited the suspicion that he was of Moorish origin, and recent decrees of the King having expressly ordered the expulsion of all the descendants of the Moors, he had been compelled to depart hurriedly, abandoning all his baggage, that is to say, the phials, the manuscripts and the books.

Left alone, Don Jose Fuez d'Alcantra could not help thinking over the long series of crosses and accidents which had till then embarrassed his life.

'I have vainly attempted everything,' said he to himself; 'fortune has hitherto invariably thwarted my expectations, and made me the slave of circumstance. Ah! how happy is he who can always follow his fancy, lord it over events, and remain sovereign of his destiny, instead of submitting to every person and to every accident!'

These reflections threw him into a fit of gloom and despondency. He sought to relieve himself from it by opening one of the books left by the Moorish doctor. It was an exposition of the system of nature, written in Latin. Jose ran through several pages, and then selected another volume, which was a treatise on the occult sciences. A third volume related to the subject of the philosopher's stone.

The character of these books clearly indicated the bent of the old Moor's genius. He had evidently been an alchemist, perhaps a necromancer! for at that period it was by no means rare to find men, especially in Spain, who had studied the art of reducing the invisible powers into obedience to their behests.

His curiosity having been excited by the result of his first researches, Don Jose turned from the books to the manuscripts. Several that he ran through appeared to contain nothing but unimportant general instructions, relative to the transmutation of metals; but, finally, he found, enclosed in a leaden case, a roll of parchment; the first lines of which caught his attention. They were magical directions for accomplishing certain wonders, such as rendering oneself invisible, changing oneself into any desired shape, and traversing the greatest distances in a moment of time. At last he came to a paragraph the title of which ran thus:—

'A method by which one may render his wish sovereign law, and cause it to be instantly fulfilled!'

The young doctor sprang from his seat almost wild with rapture.

'By the true cross!' he exclaimed, 'if this method works well, I shall not ask anything more. To render one's wish sovereign law, is not that the very acme of human felicity? But let us see if it is possible to secure this high happiness without endangering one's soul.'

He perused the directions given in the manuscript, and found in them nothing contrary to faith. To obtain the promised gift, it was all-sufficient to recite, before sleeping, a certain prayer, and to drink the contents of a little flask at the bottom of the little case.

Jose sought out this flask and uncorked it.—It contained a few drops of a dark and pleasantly fragrant liquor. He hesitated a moment, not