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THE FATE OF FATHER SHEEHY. A TALE OF TIPPERARY EIGHTY YEARS AGO. (From the New York Tablet.) BY MRS. J. SADLER.

CHAPTER V.—Continued. The judge had listened with evident impatience, and scarcely was the last word uttered when he arose, and putting up his right hand he drew down his ghastly cap over his brow, saying in a deep, guttural voice: 'Then it becomes my painful duty to pronounce the awful sentence which the law prescribes. Since you seem disposed to deny your guilt, clearly as it has been established, you are to be considered as still unrepentant. You shall be hanged, drawn, and quartered, on Saturday next, 15th instant, and may God have mercy on your soul, and grant you a sight of the enormity of your crime.'

'It is well,' replied the undaunted priest, and I thank your lordship for your good wishes.—Doubtless I have much to answer for before God, since we are all sinful creatures at the very best, but He knows that of this crime, or ought like unto it, I am wholly innocent. To His justice I fearlessly and with all confidence give myself up—praise, honor and glory to His holy name now and forever more, and may His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

Here the long-restrained feelings of Father Sheehy's friends burst forth anew—sighs and groans, and half-stifled exclamations of horror and of pity were heard on every side, and it required all the authority of the judge to restore anything like order. In the midst of the tumult the prisoner was removed, and very soon after the court adjourned till the following day.

During the short interval between the sentence and its execution nothing could equal the excitement of the public mind. People of all classes felt themselves deeply interested; the Catholics, of course, were filled with indignation, for the trial and conviction of Father Sheehy and Meighan had outraged every sense of justice, being the very climax of shameful corruption, and a direct violation of all law, human and divine. There were few men of his day so popular as Father Sheehy, and the people seemed everywhere to regard him as the victim of his high-souled generosity and undisguised sympathy with them in their sufferings. It required, indeed, all the influence of the priests to keep them from pouring into Clonmel and attacking the jail. In their ardent attachment to Father Sheehy they utterly lost sight of their own safety, and would have rushed on certain destruction, without even a chance of saving the doomed victim of religious intolerance and political hatred.

The jail was constantly surrounded by a strong military force, some of Lord Drogheda's troops having been brought from Clogheen to reinforce the garrison.

By a great stretch of favor his own immediate family were permitted to see him, and also Father Doyle, as his spiritual director. His demeanor was calm during all those mournful days, and he even succeeded in cheering and consoling his afflicted relatives by his glowing descriptions of the joy which awaits the blessed in the other world—in that world whether he was listening. He studiously diverted their minds from the violent death which awaited him, and dwelt on the joy of being released from the miseries of this life, the bliss of shaking off 'this mortal coil,' and putting on the robes of immortality.—'And then,' said he, 'as for the dark stain which will rest on my character, even that need not distress you, my kind friends; for I feel assured that the all-righteous God will clear up this fearful mystery, and show forth my innocence and that of poor Meighan. On this head I have no fears.'

It was the day before that appointed for his execution, and Father Sheehy had just parted with his two sisters, and some other dear friends, of whom he begged that they would not ask to see him on the following day, 'for,' said he, 'as I am to-morrow to appear before my God, I would rather be left to undisturbed preparation. Let none of you come near me, then, for I would fain break asunder now of my own free will those bonds of earthly affection—those 'cords of Adam' which death will rend to-morrow. Go now, my sisters—and may God bless you and yours, and guide you safe into the port of salvation—for shame—for shame—why weep so bitterly?—why, one would think you had but little of the Christian's hope. Do you not know and feel that we shall meet again—probably very soon, in that heaven where our Divine Master lives to welcome our coming?—Only keep your last end continually in view, so as to avoid sin, as much as in you lies, and I will venture to predict a happy meeting for us all, knowing that the God whom we serve delights in showing mercy to the contrite sinner.—Farewell, be of good cheer—and forget not to

pray for me when I am gone hence.' So saying he took the hand of each sister in his own, and held them a moment there, while with eyes raised to heaven he invoked a blessing on their heads, again exhorted them to be of good heart—to which they only replied by a doleful shake of the head, and a fresh burst of tears. 'No—no, no, murmured Mrs. Burke, the elder, 'there's no use in telling us that, when we have to-morrow before us. I'm afraid its little joy or pleasure we'll ever have in this world, after such a blow as this.'

'May the Lord pity us!' ejaculated the younger. 'Oh! Katty dear, how will we stand it at all? when I think that to-morrow the best of brothers is to die such a death, and his life sworn away by such vermin, too! oh, blessed Mother, it makes my blood boil, and it seems as if my poor brain was turning.'

By this time the afflicted sisters had reached the street, and went off together to their lodging-house, for their husbands had remained behind at the priest's request, to receive some instructions which would have been too harrowing for them to hear. Martin O'Brien just then came in, and Father Sheehy told him with a smile:

'Just in time, Martin, to hear my last will and testament.'

O'Brien wrung his outstretched hand in silence, more eloquent than words could have been.

'When I shall have suffered the extreme penalty of the law,' said he, laying a strong emphasis on the last word 'you will bury all of this poor body that you may be able to obtain, in the old churchyard of Shandraghan. It is not, to be sure, where you would wish to lay my remains, but I bespoke my lodging there, some months ago. You will make my grave close by that old vault, under the shade of a gnarled elm which overhangs the spot. Tell Billy Griffith that his noble protection of a poor, persecuted priest will be remembered even in heaven, if I am so happy as to reach there, and that my blessing rests and shall rest upon him and his children. You will also give him this watch' (it was a large, old-fashioned silver one)—'it is the only treasure I possess on earth, and I would fain send that excellent friend a token of my gratitude. Tell him to keep it for my sake; it is all I have to give him. To you, Thomas Burke, I give this silver snuff-box—and do you, Terence, keep this little ivory crucifix,' drawing forth one which he wore on his neck, 'but your legacy is only reverential, my dear fellow,' he added with a melancholy smile, 'for you are not to have it till after my death. Then you are to take possession, but I have worn it for many a year, and I cannot part with it while life remains. For you, Martin, I have reserved my beads, which I value very highly, for they were given me when life was warm and young within me, by one of the professors in Lournain. My breviary and a few other books I have given to Father Doyle, and so I have already bequeathed all my effects—my body to Shandraghan, and my soul to God, if He will deign to accept the offering. Not a word now—not a word,' he said, seeing that some of his listeners were about to speak. 'I'll not hear a word spoken with such a doleful face as that. O'Brien,' he suddenly added, 'we had little thought of this when discussing the matter on Arran Quay, as we walked along, looking down on the black, muddy Laffey. I know not what you might have thought, but for myself I can safely say that I never dreamed of such an end.'

'Truly,' interrupted Martin, endeavoring to speak in a cheerful tone, 'truly I must say: Father Nicholas, that I have always had a misgiving on my mind, ever since I heard the report of Bridge's murder. That report is the unfortunate cause of this dreadful catastrophe.'

'Not at all, Martin—not at all,' replied the priest briskly, 'the cause lies farther back, and may be traced to the active part I took in getting the church-rates knocked off in a parish where they ought never to have been paid, seeing that it contained not a single Protestant, and then in my encouraging the people to resist that novel and most unjust marriage-tax, these are the first causes; this pretended murder of Bridge is but an adjunct of the main scheme, for it is his disappearance had not furnished a weapon against me, they would have found another. My only grief is for poor Keating—God knows what is to become of him—and this unfortunate Meighan, who leaves so many helpless inourners behind him. But I trust God will provide for them, since He sees fit to deprive them of their main support.'

'With regard to Mr. Keating,' interposed Burke, 'I hear he has been sent to Kilkenny jail, so that he'll not be tried here.'

'Thank God for that same,' exclaimed Father Sheehy with fervor. 'He has, then, a much better chance of escape—I am truly rejoiced to hear that he is not to be tried in Clonmel.—Should any of you ever see him again tell him how anxious I was about him, and that my

prayers were continually offered up on his behalf, that God might reward his goodness even in this life by delivering him from the hands of his enemies.' You, Martin O'Brien, will pay a visit as soon as possible after to-morrow to Mr. Cornelius O'Callaghan, and thank him for his kind and respectful treatment of me. Tell him how deeply grateful I was, and that I remembered his disinterested kindness to the last moment of my existence. I believe this is all, and he looked around with a pleased expression of countenance, 'my worldly affairs are now arranged, and I am at full liberty to attend to 'the one thing needful'—my final preparation for eternity.—Father Doyle promised to come back this evening, and I hope to receive the adorable Sacrament to-morrow morning for my viaticum. So now, my dear friends, you will leave me to myself awhile—my soul must needs prepare to meet the bridegroom and secure his approbation before he ascends the tribunal of judgment. God be with you till we meet again.' He then shook the hand of each in turn, and they quitted the prison in silent anguish.

The cold, sharp wind of March—wild stormy March—was careering over the earth when on Saturday, the 15th of that month, Father Sheehy was brought out from his cell to undergo the murderer's punishment. He was attended by his faithful friend and spiritual director, Father Doyle, and of the two the latter showed far more dejection than the prisoner—the fellow.—They came out on the lapboard in front of Clonmel jail, and there stood side by side, while one loud, long shout of sorrowful greeting arose from the assembled multitude. Sighs and groans were heard on every side, and many a convulsive sob even from the bosom of brave and stout-hearted men.

'Och, then, may the Lord prepare a place for you in the glory of heaven this day, Father Sheehy dear.'

'Ay, if he hadn't been so thrue to us,' responded another, 'he wouldn't be where he is this sorrowful mornin'. It's because he always stood up for us that he's brought to this untimely end. The Lord be good and merciful to him as he was to us, anyhow.'

'Och, then, your reverence, won't you give us all your blessing, sure it's the last time we can ask it of you, and sore hearts we have for that same.'

Father Sheehy's eyes filled with tears as he advanced to the front of the board, and raising his right hand made the sign of the cross over the heads of the crowd below. 'May the Almighty God, before whose judgment seat I am about to appear, bless and protect you all, and may he grant to each of you the graces of which you stand most in need—may He preserve you steadfastly in the true faith by which alone salvation is to be obtained. I need scarcely tell you, my good people, that I die entirely innocent of the foul crime laid to my charge. As for those who have persecuted me even to death, and the jury who condemned me on such evidence, I forgive and pity them all, and would not change place with any one of them for all the riches of the earth. The care of my reputation I leave to my God—He will re-establish it in His own good time. In conclusion, I pray you all to retire quietly to your homes, and make no disturbance, for that would only give a pretext for fresh persecution.'

He then shook hands with the priest, and begged to be remembered in his prayers, then calmly turned and made a signal to the hangman. That functionary was prompt in his obedience—a moment and the body of Father Sheehy swung in the air—another, and he had ceased to breathe—the pain of death was passed—Heaven in mercy had made it but momentary, and the wild scream that arose from the multitude below, loud and heart-piercing as it was, rolled away, unheard by him, and mingled with the boisterous wind that filled the air around.

'May the Lord God of Hosts have mercy on your soul, Nicholas Sheehy!' exclaimed Father Doyle, loud enough to be heard by the people in the street. 'He will not refuse you that justice which your fellow-men withhold from you. A melancholy death was yours, but your soul has, I trust, found favor before God, for you were indeed free from guile.'

But all was not yet over. 'The body of the martyred priest was cut down and taken away to undergo the remainder of the sentence—hanging was not enough for the brutal spirit of the Protestant ascendancy—the poor, lifeless frame was to be drawn and quartered; and while the task was being accomplished, Edward Meighan was brought out on the lap board. He, too, declared his innocence in the most positive terms, and offered

It was fortunate for Mr. Keating that he was tried in Kilkenny rather than Clonmel, for the Orange faction was not so powerful, and the jury scouted the evidence brought against him, being chiefly the same miscreants who had prosecuted Father Sheehy. The consequence was that the injured gentleman was honorably acquitted, and Father Sheehy's prediction verified.

up an affecting prayer for those who had sworn away his life—for the jury who had condemned him on their false testimony, and for the judge who had passed sentence upon him. He also repeated his solemn declaration of Father Sheehy's innocence.

'Though I know,' said he, 'that he is already gone where I am soon to follow, but still it's right to speak the truth to the very last. That good priest has been put to death wrongfully, and when they done it to him that was God's own servant, they may well do it to me—poor, sinful man that I am—though, thanks to the great God, I'm as innocent of this murder as the child unborn. That's all I have to say, only that I freely forgive all my enemies, and pray God to have mercy on my soul, and the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints to pray for me, and for them I leave behind.'

He was launched into eternity almost before the words were uttered—no, not quite so soon, for his sufferings were somewhat longer than those of the priest for two or three minutes he struggled in the agony of his violent death, and then all was still—all, at least, save a low moaning sound that arose from under a neighboring gateway where old Atty Meighan and his miserable daughter-in-law had taken refuge. A few of their neighbors and friends had gathered around them, and were bestowing upon them such consolation as they could; but their words made little or no impression on the heart-broken sufferers, who could only sigh and moan, and look into each other's eyes, and grasp each other's hands in silence—their anguish was far too great for words, and not one tear did either shed. Their faces were pale—pale and haggard—their eyes wild and blood-shot, and the old man's thin gray hair hung unheeded around his face, while poor Biddy's fair tresses were scarcely concealed by the little linen cap that was their only covering, for the hood of her blue cloak had fallen back. Neither of the two had ventured to look out on the fearful scene just enacted, but they knew and felt that all was over, and that their main stay was gone—the cries of the appalled spectators had told them of the dreadful fact, and they felt as though utter darkness had fallen on the earth, and a crushing weight on their hearts. Poor, lonely mourners—that frail old man, tottering on the verge of the grave, and that young woman—the mother of three fatherless children—with her small, fair features shrunken and wasted as though by the hand of disease—mortal disease. Poor old father, and poor heart-broken wife—the strong and vigorous arm that had supported them was now wrenched from them, and still in death, and the kindly heart that had loved them—oh, how well—was cold, cold and dead. And if he had died a natural death—if he had died with his friends around him, kneeling in prayer, and closed his eyes in peace, what would it have been—at least so they thought. At that moment no thought of consolation entered their minds, but afterwards, when time had somewhat dulled the acute anguish of that terrible day, they found comfort in the remembrance of his 'having had the priest.' 'Sure he died a good Christian, as he lived.—Father Doyle had given him the rites of the Church, and the good God be praised for it, he died an innocent man. May the Lord be good and merciful to your soul, Ned Meighan.'

Such was the winding up of many a conversation amongst the friends and neighbors of the dead.

The crowd was dispersed at the point of the bayonet—the streets of the old town were again quiet and lonely-looking, and their silence was the silence of death, for the majority of the inhabitants had closed their houses in token of sympathy and respect for the innocent victims of unjust law. Everything wore an aspect of mourning, horrified in part from the cold, cheerless weather, and the gray light that struggled thro' the dark masses of cloud which obscured the firmament. Such was the aspect of Clonmel when on that inauspicious evening, about an hour before sunset, a strange and ghastly spectacle was presented to the eyes of those who passed by the prison. Over the arched porch of the old jail was hoisted on a pole the severed head of the ill-fated priest, the well-known features little changed, were it not for the unnatural purple hue diffused over all—the natural effect of the fearful death which had parted soul and body.

The Catholics who had occasion to pass that way hurried on with a sludder and murmured 'Lord have mercy on him!' as they glanced at the dreadful object over the gateway, but there were scores of hearts in Clonmel that evening that exulted in the 'day's work done.' In many a tavern through the town there was merry-making and carousing, for the Orangemen held 'high holiday,' and their leaders pledged each other in foaming tankards to the further success of the good cause, and the greater downfall of Pope and Popery. Many of them there were who were not ashamed to boast of having 'sent Sheehy to where ought to be long ago.'

'Here's may the ould fellow give him his warmest corner,' said one big, burly Orangeman, as he tossed off his glass of 'the rare stuff' at the bar of the 'Spread Eagle.'

'Ay! and that all the priests in Ireland may soon get their due, as he got it—that's the worst I wish them, Davy Robinson,' cried another, as he followed the other's example, and swallowed his potation, nothing loth, then laid down the capacious measure, and snacked his lips approvingly.

And how all that faction did exult, and lord it over the prostrate Catholics, and boast that many more of them would share the fate of Sheehy and Meighan before all was over. 'We have Keating fast enough,' would they say, 'and there'll be more in for this same affair before the week's over.'

And it was too true—only a few days had past when several other Catholics of respectable standing were arrested on the same charge, two of them being relatives of Father Sheehy. One of these, Roger Sheehy, was acquitted out of very shame, but was brought up again on a fresh accusation, a little while after. However, God saw fit to bring him unharmed out of the hands of his enemies. Of the others, three were executed, viz., Edmund Sheehy, a second cousin of the priest, and a gentleman of excellent character, who left a wife and four young children to bewail his untimely end—also James Farrell and James Buxton, both of whom were men of education and in good circumstances. Seven or eight others were tried and acquitted, evidently in order to save appearances, as they were nearly all bound over before they left the court to appear at an early day to answer sundry charges of high treason.

Many years had rolled away, and still the head of Father Sheehy was bleaching over the porch of Clonmel jail, harrowing the hearts and souls of the people. Many applications had been made by his friends to have it removed, but all in vain, until more than twenty years had passed away since it was hoisted there—grisy monument as it was, with its fleshless bones and eyeless sockets, and the fearful associations clinging around it—memories of vile injustice, and gross perjury, and religious intolerance, and cruel oppression. Oh yes, truly it was a mournful spectacle—the head of that martyred priest; and what made it more mournful still was the entire establishment of Father Sheehy's innocence only a few years after his execution, in direct fulfillment of his prediction. But by a special ordination of retributive justice, before that head was withdrawn from the public gaze, scarcely one individual who sat on Father Sheehy's jury remained alive—all, or nearly all had been cut off by strange and sudden deaths—some of them died of diseases too loathsome to mention—one, in a state of raging madness, biting and gnawing his own flesh—another killed by a fall from his horse, and so on of all the rest, with only one or two exceptions. As for the miserable witnesses who had sworn away so many innocent lives, their fate was just what might be expected. The wretched Moll Dunlea was killed by falling into a cellar in the city of Cork, while Lowrgan finished his ignoble career in that disgrace to Dublin—Barrack Street—the victim of his own evil courses.—Poor, poor wretch—he was still young in years when the measure of his iniquities was filled up, and the thread of his life was cut short by the avenging hand of God.

It was seven years after the death of Father Sheehy when a native of Clogheen entered a tavern on the bleak coast of Newfoundland, in company with another person with whom he had been transacting business, and they went in to have a friendly glass together before they parted. While they were sitting at a table, chatting over the bargain just concluded, and sipping at intervals their whiskey-punch, our Clogheen man suddenly fixed his eyes on the face of one who just then came into the shop. Starting from his seat, he darted forward and caught the new-comer by the breast:

'Tell me, honest man!' he exclaimed, 'are you not from Tipperary, Ireland?'

'Why, then, indeed I am,' said the other, looking askance at his assailant, and endeavoring at the same time to shake off his grasp.

'Were you ever in Clogheen?' persisted Peter Crowley, still holding him fast, and looking into his very eyes.

'Is it in Clogheen? oh, bedad, if I had a shilling for every time I was in it, it's myself 'id be the rich man all out. Why, man alive, I was bred and born athin two or three miles of that same place.'

'And your name?' asked Crowley, with a sort of convulsive trembling that indicated the deepest emotion.