

advice of value. An old man may be permitted to reject advice without discourtesy. He has given so much in his time—when he also was young.

Carson laughed, even against his will.

"What will you do, father?" he asked.

"I start at dawn," said Father Michael gently.

When the light was gray and the white mists were rising they unrolled themselves from their blankets and swallowed the coffee which Imbono had prepared. Carson was in a mood of unusual irritation, but Father Michael was, as ever, placidly cheerful.

"May all good attend you, my son," he said. "For myself, I am assured that all will be well with me."

"I wish I thought so," Carson almost snapped.

"Whatever chances, all will be well," the little priest said calmly, and without more ado he set out upon his journey.

Carson stood and watched him limp away. He looked very small and frail in the gray light. Carson was never sure if he obeyed a sudden impulse or acted upon a resolve that had fixed itself over night. He was accustomed to impute the worst motives to himself.

At last, as he watched, he suddenly spoke aloud: "Hang it, I can't let him go alone! I should feel like a cur all my life. But it's dashed madness, all the same!"

He turned to Imbono with a few curt orders, which Imbono received with marked sullenness. It was never to his liking to be separated from his master. But Carson permitted no argument.

He left the camp and swung away through the trees after the little priest.

Father Michael turned at the sound of his step.

"I also am going to Fernandez, father," Carson said curtly.

Father Michael lifted his eyebrows.

"Is not the decision somewhat sudden, my son?" he asked. "And what of the danger? Only a matter of pressing urgency."

Carson laughed. "The matter is urgent enough," he said dryly. "It is a little question of vanity. I can't let you go alone."

"But it is needless," Father Michael protested. "I must go, for I have given my promise. But why should two lives be risked?"

Carson had lost all his irritation. His manner was cheerfully genial. That was always his way when he was about to walk with open eyes into a tight place.

"You are obstinate, father, if I may say so," he said. "But I am rather obstinate, too. I'm coming with you if you have no strong personal objection."

For a moment Father Michael stared at him with troubled eyes. Then a sudden brilliant smile swept across his wrinkled face.

"Come, my son," he said, and the two went forward side by side.

Their progress was not rapid, for it was regulated by Father Michael's speed. Carson knew that the little man must be enduring something not far short of torture. His limp grew more pronounced, and he struggled on with tight-shut lips. But his courage held superbly. He made no complaint, and he would admit to but little pain when Carson questioned him.

"I think at times that there is no such thing as physical pain if one has but the will to think of other things," he said with a whimsical smile. "I am thinking now of Fernandez and his wife. They must be themselves in some little danger, do you not think so, Mr. Carson?"

"Undoubtedly," Carson answered. "But the store is strong, with the river upon its front. And Fernandez's native boys are to be trusted. I think the chances are that they will be safe."

"When shall we reach the store?" Father Michael asked. "I am but a poor walker today, I must confess."

"It's a wonder to me that you can keep going at all," Carson said bluntly. "We ought to make the store some time tomorrow morning, but it's more a question of if than when." And he laughed cheerfully.

Father Michael, limping forward with his lined face more colorless than usual, and heavy drops upon his forehead, made answer with entire serenity: "If it be God's will we shall reach the store, though all the tribes in Africa should bar the way. If we are cut off, it is still His will. But I confess to a certain anxiety upon your account, Mr. Carson."

Carson laughed once more. "Please don't worry about me, father," he said. "I'm a timid man in a general way, but it's—it's difficult to be really cowardly in your company somehow."

The little priest only answered with his quaint smile, and the strange pair plodded steadily on.

Father Michael was apparently a stranger to caution, but Carson insisted that they should observe a certain prudence. Where the bush was thickest they traveled perforce by the winding native paths, but when possible they steered a way by compass through the virgin forest. It was about midday when they had their first clear hint of danger. Carson's ears were sharp. Suddenly he laid his hand upon Father Michael's shoulder and dragged him down into a thick clump of bush.

"Keep quiet!" he whispered. "There's a war party coming!"

And from where they crouched they saw fifty or sixty natives armed with spears and ancient guns by. They were led by a giant chief magnificently arrayed in an ill-fitting coat of purple velvet. When they were out of hearing Carson rose to his feet with a dry smile.

"Our luck is in," he said. "If they had seen us—well, we should never have reached Fernandez's."

"And I say that God's hand is over us. But we mean the same," the little priest said gently. "I think that we shall reach Fernandez's by dawn. I shall need no sleep tonight."

Carson glanced at the little man's pain-wringing face and fragile figure.

"Certainly pluck has nothing to do with brute strength," he muttered. "Try leaning on my shoulder, father, for a little while at least."

"Indeed, Mr. Carson, I need no help," Father Michael answered. "But with all my heart I thank you for your gentle courtesy."

Then they resumed their weary march, and Carson, although he did not voice the thought, could only wonder whimsically how long their luck would stand by them. It seemed to him that they were like doomed men walking beneath a sword that must fall in but a little while. And yet, oddly enough, he never for a moment found himself wishing that he had let Father Michael go his way alone.

When the blow fell it was without warning. A single musket shot bellowed thunderously through the forest, and Carson sank upon his knees.

"I've got it, father, through the leg!" he gasped. "Run if you can. That was a long-range shot."

But Father Michael bent above him as though he had not heard.

"Are you much hurt, my son?" he asked.

"No, but I'm out of this game," Carson said angrily. "Run, man, run! There's no sense in staying. They may not follow you when they see me."

Father Michael smiled. "I would not run if I could," he said quietly, and he drew out his handkerchief to bandage Carson's wound.

"Here they come!" Carson said pettishly. "It—it seems a dashed waste!"

There was a patter of feet, a burst of triumphant howls and thirty natives broke through the trees upon the helpless pair.

Through the noisy discussion that followed Father Michael, with cool, capable hands, did what he might for Carson's hurt. It was painful enough and crippling, at any rate for the time, but not serious.

"What will they do with us?" the priest asked some minutes later. The two had been pulled to their feet, and each between two brawny natives, were being dragged through the forest.

"They are taking us to a village," Carson answered dryly. "I heard them mention a witch doctor. You will understand what they may mean."

"We are still in God's hands," Father Michael answered calmly. "It was an hour later when the two spoke together once more. They had been received with indescribable clamor, in the walled village. The lean, painted witch doctor had inspected the prisoners with evil, glowing eyes. While men, women, children and cur dogs had howled about them in a triumphant ring. Then they had been bound and flung into a hut to await their fate.

"These poor people," the priest murmured whimsically; "they show little respect or fear for the mighty white men."

"That's so," Carson answered grimly. "It looks like a pretty serious native rising. No doubt they have their grievances. They need a sharp lesson, and they'll get it, all right, but it won't advantage us much."

"I suppose not," Father Michael said simply. "What will be our fate?"

"As far as I could make out through the din, we have, roughly, another hour of life before us," Carson answered.

"And how are we to die?"

"By fire at the tree of sacrifice," Carson said with simple directness.

The little priest shrugged his shoulders. So, it is God's will. But I grieve for you, my son. I know well that you did but accompany me because of the chivalry in your heart. You English, many of you, are chivalrous, but I feel that I am responsible for your death."

"Please don't think that, father," Carson said quietly. "I came to please myself, because it seemed contemptible to let you go alone. And it's not a moment for pretty speeches, so you will understand that I mean what I say—it seems to me to be something of an honor to be your companion."

"You are what they call an English gentleman," Father Michael answered. "I have met men like you before, clean-handed and modest, making little of their own high courage. It helps my weakness to have you with me in this trial."

Carson only laughed gently at the words. When the priest spoke again it was with deep sadness.

"I am thinking of Juanita. She is waiting for me, relying upon my word, and I shall not come. She leaned upon me, and it is possible that she will die. If her young life could but have been saved, it would have mattered nothing what happened afterwards to me."

"I don't think I have ever met any one quite like you, father," Carson remarked, with genuine wonder. "Don't you ever think of yourself at

all? Haven't you a thought to spare for your own life?"

Father Michael emitted a faint chuckle in the gloom. "In truth, if I dwell upon my life I should prove myself a sorry coward and disgrace myself in your eyes, my son. I am weak, and I shrink from the thought of a death of pain. And yet—well, the path of torment we shall tread will be short, and beyond it are better things than those we leave."

Carson made no direct answer. He could not speak with ease or readiness about religion. After a while he said:

"I'm no braver than other men, rather below the average, in fact. I only hope I shall contrive not to let the cur before these natives."

And Father Michael said simply: "I think that to both of us will be given strength."

Then they lay in silence for the little while that remained to them, each thinking his own thoughts. Carson's were concerned with a girl. It is probable that nine out of every ten men who face death with a clear brain are thinking of a woman.

Apparently Father Michael was thinking of one also, although in another fashion. For when their guards had come for them, when their legs had been unbound and they had been dragged into the open air, when a yelling procession had been formed about them and the village had been left behind, he spoke aloud and Carson caught the words, "Poor Juanita! Poor child! If I could but have gone to her first!"

Carson stared at the little man and marveled. Such selfishness in the very face of a hideous death was beyond his understanding.

He himself was thinking of many matters, trivial and otherwise. How dark was the sky! A heavy storm was surely coming. Was a death by burning very painful? Many martyrs, delicate women among them, had borne it bravely. But a man had better think of something else. He wondered what a certain Clare was doing. He would have given, oh, very much to see her again. Her face was always oddly vivid to him. A man had only to close his eyes to see her clearly. He would have liked to send a message to her, but that was not to be. Better not think about Clare too much perhaps. Had they far to go? No; the trees were thinning out before them. He saw a circular clearing of bare earth trodden by many feet. This would be where the natives held their dark, revolting and unspacious ceremonies. Carson squared his lean shoulders instinctively. The time of bitter trial was come.

In the centre of the clearing rose the gnarled, withered trunk of a tree blackened by many fires. The prisoners were bound against it, side by side. Dry brushwood and heavier fagots were piled about them in a ring. Then began incantations and weird dancing, and a ceaseless, horrible, nerve-racking din. And all the while the sky grew blacker, and, although the evening was still young, the light was falling steadily. The prisoners fronted their tormentors with steady courage, standing straightly in their bonds and longing for this agony of waiting to cease.

"Good by, father," Carson said suddenly. "Time's up at last."

"Good by, my son," Father Michael answered. "I pray you to forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive," Carson said. "But if you would care to give a thoroughly sinful man your blessing—"

Father Michael, clear voiced and calm, murmured his blessing as the witch doctor drew near, flaming torch in hand. And at that moment the first heavy drops of rain came hissing down.

"My word," Carson muttered, "there's going to be a reprieve!"

And so it proved. As the brushwood caught, and the long, lean, yellow flames began to leap and crackle the storm broke fairly. The rain sluiced down in a black, roaring cataract. The flames were choked out beneath it in a moment. The natives covered away for shelter under the trees, and the resplendent prisoners stood alone in the clearing, dripping and shivering in their bonds.

The storm was brief as it was violent. Carson spoke, gasping for breath, as the clouds swept away and the sun peered out.

"We're still alive, father, and it will puzzle them to find wood dry enough for our roasting today."

"Yes, God has spared us wonderfully for His own high reasons," the little priest answered with reverence.

The thwarted natives emerged from cover and gathered about their prisoners. There followed a clamorous discussion, in which the grim-eyed witch doctor finally bore down all opposition. Carson listened with eager attention to the words that decided their fate. He gave an exclamation.

"What will they do to us?" Father Michael asked steadily.

"Some of them were for sparing us," Carson answered. "They seemed to think that the gods meant us to live when they sent rain so opportunely, but that old ruffian, the witch doctor, would not hear of mercy. He seems gluttonous for blood. He says that fire will not harm us, and that now they must try what water will do. We are to be tied to posts beside the river and drowned by the rising tide. The tide is making up now, it appears. Everything is propitious. They are going to take us to the river now."

"It is still God's will," was all that Father Michael said.

It was not far to the river. The prisoners were dragged thither with rough speed. Three posts rose up from the brown shallows. To two of them Father Michael and Carson were bound. Already the water reached to the priest's armpits, and it was rising fast.

"You will have longer to live, my son, being the taller man," Father Michael said calmly. "I know not why, but I have the feeling that you may yet be saved. If you live, I pray you to go to Juanita and tell her that I would have kept my word."

Carson gave his promise. "But I see little chance for either of us," he added. Father Michael did not seem to hear him. He was gazing before him with rapt, far-away eyes. There was a faint smile, as Carson always remembered, upon his colorless face. The water had reached his shoulders. He was dashing up to himself, for forgetful of Carson and the gloating natives who watched from the bank.

Carson just caught the words: "Juanita! Juanita! my promise—I kept my promise!" The brown water rose steadily. It was near to Carson's shoulders now, tall man as he was. He heard beside him a strange, dreadful, choking sound, mercifully brief. He shut his eyes.

He opened them at the sound of a familiar yell. Four large canoes were dashing up the river towards him. He recognized Imbono in the bows of one, urging on the paddlers with savage threats. He saw little, dark, uniformed men and the gleam of rifles. It was difficult to realize that he was saved.

Father Michael had been known and loved by the rescuers. He was beyond their aid, but they exacted a price for his murder, a grim and bitter price.

Carson came in the dawn to Fernandez's store. The young Portuguese trader stood aguish at his tidings.

"Father Michael dead! Drowned about 6 o'clock last evening? But—better think of something else. He wondered what a certain Clare was doing. He would have given, oh, very much to see her again. Her face was always oddly vivid to him. A man had only to close his eyes to see her clearly. He would have liked to send a message to her, but that was not to be. Better not think about Clare too much perhaps. Had they far to go? No; the trees were thinning out before them. He saw a circular clearing of bare earth trodden by many feet. This would be where the natives held their dark, revolting and unspacious ceremonies. Carson squared his lean shoulders instinctively. The time of bitter trial was come.

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royalty was trying to put the State above the Church.—Providence Visitor.

A POINT WELL TAKEN

The Advance (Congregationalist) uses a true and forcible illustration. It says: "I would as soon commit cargoes of diamonds to charless ships as to commit the religious education of my child to a creedless church. The outcry against creeds is idiotic. The man who cries out against them has a creed—he believes that creeds are wrong, and that is a creed in itself. A creed is simply what a man believes."

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DUBLIN'S CATHEDRALS

Archbishop Walsh of Dublin lately referred to the Cathedrals of that city as having been "transferred to the use of our Protestant fellow-citizens." His statement opened up a discussion in the columns of the daily papers in regard to the ownership of St. Patrick's and Christ Church. As an answer to Archbishop Walsh, a certain Canon Merwyn and an "Archbishop" Bernard collaborated in a communication to the press, in which it was stated:

"The letter of Archbishop Walsh in your issue of today contains a misstatement so glaring that it can not be permitted to go unchallenged for a single hour. The cathedrals of St. Patrick and Christ Church never, at any time, belonged to the Church of Rome. They were founded, built, and maintained by the Church of Ireland, to which they still belong."

In the "Reformation" which came over England in the days of Henry VIII, and Elizabeth, the bulk of the English people were dragged out of Catholicity into Protestantism. There took place at the same time a wholesale transfer of the Catholic houses of worship to Protestant control. In justification of this robbery the Anglicans argued that their ancestors erected the churches which the Protestant descendants took for their use. In Ireland, however, there is not even this weak foundation for the Episcopal title to the Cathedrals in question. The Church of Ireland which "founded built and maintained" these structures could not have been other than the Roman Catholic. In the days of St. Patrick, and up to the present time, Ireland has remained loyal to Rome, and in that general apostasy which swept over the northern nations of Europe almost four hundred years ago she continued steadfast in her faith. The people, then, who erected Dublin's Cathedrals were Roman Catholics. The work was not done by the ancestors of the few Anglo-Irish of the Pale, who changed their religion unceremoniously of the bidding of a king or queen. Canon Merwyn and "Archbishop" Bernard have revived a historic fact that the Catholic Irish can never forget. They have also drawn attention to this distasteful truth, the glories of the Anglican Church in the British Isles in the line of architecture were appropriated by the Protestants from their Catholic neighbors in the days when

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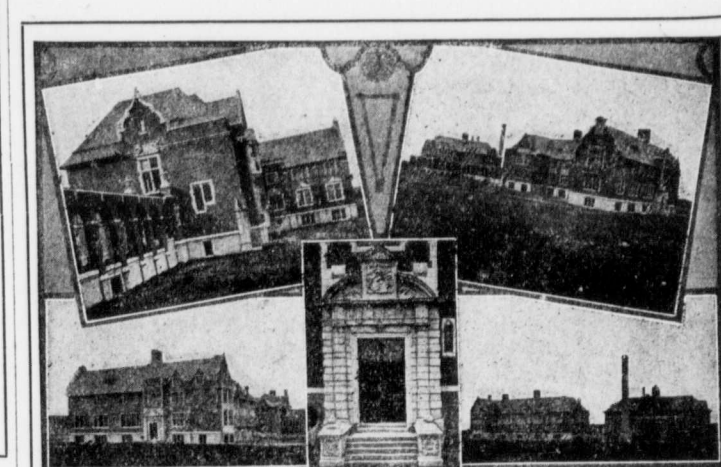
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