

PADRE FELIPO.

Monsieur le Cure was puzzled, but he did not like to doubt the word of one who was a priest as he was himself. A priest? The tall, supple youth standing before him was more fitting to be one of those mad Spanish soldiers, who had so recently gone to New Orleans with the new Governor, than a healer of world-sick souls. For he had nothing of sanctity in his luminous eyes and full mouth, usually as richly red as a pomegranate—not a trace of asceticism in his perfect face, darker even than most faces of Spain; though his *scoutans* were torn and all stained with rain and heavy dews, and clogged about the hem with sand, it was worn with careless grace. Barefooted, with every pulse throbbing from fatigue and faint for food he stood before the old man a suppliant for alms—in calling they were equal—yet there was in his look the dominance of an irresistible magnetism.

"Thou wast on thy way from Texas and those who travelled with thee were slain by Indians, Padre Felipe?" Monsieur le Cure asked after a long silence, wondering why he had not gone to New Orleans, instead of coming here to Mobile.

"I have told thee the truth, good father."

Padre Felipe lifted his head with its crown of close-curling black hair and gazed straight down into the perplexed blue eyes of the other. For a moment the old man hesitated, but ashamed of himself quickly said:

"Since the Holy Mother has guided thy steps to me, remain here as long as thou seest fit to do so."

"To aid thee in thy work?" Padre Felipe questioned and added, "the dear saints know I will do all I can for thee."

"Dost thou not fear to stay? The yellow fever is in the Settlement and we have much distress among us. Yet I should be glad if thou wouldst dwell with us for a time, for I can scarcely do that which I ought among my people. What with the offices for the dying and dead I cannot find a moment to go to those who need the sickness of their souls cured."

His doubt and incertitude fled when Padre Felipe replied:

"I do not fear the *vomito*; nor have I had it."

"That is well then," the Cure told him, pleased that the brilliant eyes looked into his so fearlessly.

He was a lonely man, and doubly so since the English had come to crush out the bright life of the French, and he rejoiced that Padre Felipe would abide with him. For the latter—he was but a child to the Cure—had, it was evident, that which endears one to hearts worn out by conflict with the world—strong, rich blood bounding in his veins, and a bold courage ready to meet all danger.

Besides he was beautiful as those boy-hermits of the East, who had gone forth from crowded cities to the wilderness to pray and fight the devil.

"Sit here, my son," the Cure urged, pointing to a chair near him, suddenly mindful that Padre Felipe had remained standing since he came an hour ago and noting the lines of weariness in his face.

Glad to ease his limbs Padre Felipe sank in the huge chair. A great languor was on him, and he leaned his head back, closing his broad, long-lashed eyes like one to whom the peace of the place was exquisite. He had journeyed far that day and many preceding ones, and the big square room of the little wooden house where the priest studied and worked was as blissful verdure in the desert to him. Several moments passed, but he did not open his eyes or speak; and Monsieur le Cure, seeing that he slept, turned to a cumbersome table and began to write letters home to France, also to the Vicar-General. His packet would go in the ship which sailed the next morning at daybreak, but a *coureur de bois*, whom he knew well, had promised to take a letter to M. de la Roche when he journeyed thence. In all of them the Cure told of the Spanish priest Heaven had sent him to solace him in this time of plague and sorrow.

Two hours passed during which Padre Felipe slept on and the old man wrote; and as he wrote the tears came in his eyes for longing to see those of his own blood who dwelt apart from him. Pure as he was and above the loves of earth he knew that never, until the dear Christ should receive him in Paradise, would he behold any who had been with him in childhood. Therefore his sight grew dim and his heart ached, though his soul was in the life he led in this wild land, given over now to an alien people to whom the Blessed Mother was no more than an image—a picture on the wall. Yet God was good to send this stranger who had a leonine daring in his features. So he wrote in praise as if in atonement for the doubt that seized upon him when Padre Felipe had entered his door, saying that he had been directed there by a soldier at the Fort who gave him a surety of welcome.

The heat lessened as the glare of the spent day surged into grayish shadows. The air was cool with the breeze that blew up from the Gulf and caught on its way the scent of the *pinettes* over which it swept.

Monsieur le Cure finished writing and went to Vespers in the church near the parochial residence. He did not awaken Padre Felipe; it seemed to his tender thought that the inert figure and bare, bruised feet were too weary even to traverse the short distance to the chapel. But, despite his consideration, he sighed and murmured a prayer for his weakness in letting the young priest sleep on.

He was absent longer than his wont, as many people drew about him after the service was done—they had so much to tell him of their joys, and woes, and fears. And the *coureur de bois*, meeting him, had to have a word of sound counsel, since he was prone to fall to wrangling and thought nothing more of a fight than he did of a day's hunt.

Finally it was over, and Monsieur le Cure went home, where he found Padre Felipe still asleep.

Remi, the old man who had long served him, met him at the threshold with more than usual anger in his sour, unshined visage. A lighted candle was in his hand, which he held so that its flame fell upon their guest.

"*Quais, mon pere, how comes this stranger here who sleeps like he was dead? Though he be consecrated by Mother Church, I put no faith in him.*"

"Remi, thou hadst ever a tongue bitter as those oranges I thought so long were sweet," Monsieur le Cure answered with a smile, curling his fine calm lips. "And like the fruit," he continued, "thou art good only when fire has been applied to thee."

"What dost thou mean?" Remi asked, puckering his leathery face so that it looked as if carved from a walnut.

"This—put the fruit in boiling sugar and it is a sweetmeat fit for a king; and put thee in the heat of trouble and thou comest out—sharp and bitter still, but so true, so steadfast, a king might seek thy friendship."

"*Chut!*" Remi exclaimed in pretended anger. "Arouse him. Thy supper is cooling, and thou hast hungered since morning; for thy breakfast was given to an old Indian."

"Awake, my son, our evening meal awaits us," Monsieur le Cure called as he laid his hand on Padre Felipe's shoulder.

A slight movement and a long sigh, an upward gesture of the lithe sinewy arms and the heavily fringed lids lifted from the broad eyes, and Padre Felipe was awake.

Springing up he glanced about him beyond the light of Remi's candle into the shadows like one who had good cause to dread the night. But as the drowsiness cleared from his brain he said, with a smile of infinite sweetness:

"The Indians have made me fearful." "They would make the evil one himself quake," Remi declared.

Remi, set a flask of wine out for Padre Felipe is overcome and needs his strength restored.

"Yes, Monsieur le Cure," Remi assented. Yet he went off, muttering: "Wine, my master serves this wayfarer better than he does himself, since not a drop does he ever taste, though he needs it much at times. Such fine, rich wine, too, and cordials as we have—and all given to any ailing Indian or rasal of a soldier who tells a tale of fatigue. Bah!"

While Remi was gone the priest bade Padre Felipe go in the next room where he could wash the dust from his face and hands, and poor bruised feet. When he had finished they were bidden to supper, which Remi placed upon the heavy table where the master had written his letters.

There were crabs made in a savory soup with onions and garlic and powdered saffron leaves, the last a trick of flavoring caught from the Indians, and little twisted loaves of white bread from the Royal Bakery; then there was the flask of wine, robust and strong enough to send the laggard blood hurrying from heart to brain; and for dessert, pink-fleshed figs as sweet as honey.

They talked but little while they ate, for Padre Felipe was nearly famished and the Cure was busy thinking of the work he had to do that night among the sick. For him, he only ate a few figs and a bit of bread and drank a cup of water cooled in huge jars that were left to stand in the shade. Remi sat at table with them, and being fond of the soup he had prepared he ate a quantity of it and drank wine enough to dull his wits.

After they had eaten and the color was warm in Padre Felipe's lips the Cure went to the church with him, where he left him and went on his way among his parishioners to pray and watch with them.

Dipping his hand in the holy water Padre Felipe crossed himself, then walked slowly to the altar on which the gold and silver shone in the moonlight flowing through an open window. The great brazen crucifix glittered as though it were day, and the marble Mother and Child gleamed with the softness of pearl in the transmuting radiance. Over it all rose the sweetest incense earth can give to Heaven—the odor of snowy oleanders and jasmine some maiden had heaped at the Virgin's feet.

He knelt, and looking on the awful agony of the cross a shudder passed through him and his eyes grew moist; over his face swept a look of such worshipping love as made it sweet with ineffable tenderness. Bending his head he told his beads and wept until the hot salt tears fell upon his dark slender hands. He was very young; and the griefs of his soul brought forth the tears, ever quick to spring at his age. As he prayed tranquility came to his heart and his weeping ceased, though he knelt on and on while about him the white light streamed; then grew dim and dimmer as the night waned. At last it ebbed away, and a thick darkness filled the chapel.

Each day he went through the burning sun that fed the greedy pestilence like fuel feeds a fire, and tended those who were ill. He held to their cracked lips the hot drink made from orange leaves, which brought ease and blessed moisture to the racked limbs; he sat in the stifling rooms listening to the babble of delirium until his lungs were choked; he bent over the yellow corpses that reeked with black vomit and made them clean for burial—all with humble gentleness that made the Cure's heart rejoice. Even Remi overcame his prejudice and acknowledged the patience that touched sublimity. But never once did Padre Felipe hear confession or administer the last rites, saying he was not fit.

Monsieur le Cure thought it strange, though he let him have his way; for he knew how in many a soul there often abode reason for secret expiation for some sin, however slight. He was sure that in good time the boy—as he fondly called him—would seek the amelioration of the confessional. So being wise the old priest said nothing and waited, but he wished many times for relief in the church.

One midday when the sky was gray as if its blue had been eaten out by the awful heat, and not even the faintest puff of breeze stole from the Bay the Cure had an urgent summons to a dying fisherman, who lived far below the Settlement. Before he went he sought Padre Felipe, who sat on his bed of pine straw and skins more worn than on the day he came. For he had breathed in

the poison of the plague until it filled his veins, and even now a fever was scorching him.

"Brother," the old man said with his wise calm eyes fixed on the haggard features before him, "I am called to a dying creature who lives far from here. I may not return until to-morrow, so thou must go to the church in my place this evening. Should any soul be passing in Mobile give it—"

He never finished, for Padre Felipe rose up, crying with horror in his voice: "No, no, Father, I am not fit. I have told thee that ever since I came."

The serenity of the Cure was broken by such surprise that he could only stammer: "Not fit, not fit?" Thou who has been a very saint among my people."

A long pause, in which Padre Felipe looked through the open window at a distant stretch of ground covered with rank coffee-weeds, then beyond to the dense pine-trees brushing against the low sultry clouds. His restless gaze swept back and strayed to a myrtle, whose crinkled pink blossoms seemed curling more closely in the heavy air. An over-ripe fig dropped to the earth from the tree before him. The rustling of the foliage as it fell roused him and he slowly said:

"Was there ever a saint who lied?" "What dost thou mean? Speak my son," the Cure urged with quivering mouth. "But come," he entreated, holding out his hand to Padre Felipe.

"To the confessional? No; it would be sin to tell thee there what I have done."

Outside Remi called that the man who had come for Monsieur le Cure was in great haste—he feared a storm, and storms on the Bay were dangerous.

Padre Felipe lunged himself on his knees before the Cure and bent down until his face was hidden. Stooping over him the old man laid his wrinkled hand on the black curls, thick and soft as astrakhan.

Again Remi called. "Father," Padre Felipe's breath came in gasps as he leaned more heavily against the priest, "I have lied. I was never in Texas—I am from New Orleans. I—I am no priest."

"No priest? What is the meaning of thy act?" the Cure asked, thinking how he had doubted Padre Felipe the day he came. But he kept his hand on the clustering hair. No matter what the sin be—God's servant—had no right to judge.

Remi entered the room followed by the fisherman's brother, a stullen, black-browed creature, who said it was high time they were off as he had no mind to be on the Bay in a storm. The Cure was compelled to go. Bidding Padre Felipe adieu he set out with many misgivings, since he thought the living had greater need of him than the one to whom he went.

He did not return until late the next night. When he entered his home Remi met him with all the sour look gone out of his shriveled face on which there was a deep solemnity. The place was oppressively still, and on the table lay Padre Felipe's rosary. The clumsy door, between the big front room and the small one back of it was closed.

"How many have died since yesterday?" the Cure asked, sitting down in his huge chair.

For a moment Remi hesitated, then answered in a hushed tone: "There has been but one."

"Old Baptiste Valcour; was it not?" "Baptiste is doing well, and yesterday asked for an onion, which was given him. He began to grow strong the moment he ate it."

"Who then is dead?" "Padre Felipe." "Padre Felipe? He was well but yesterday?"

"Not so. Even then the fever was on him, and he said he had ailed for days. This morning early the black blood came up from his stomach, and he died at noon."

Remi spoke like a man who held something back, which he dreaded to tell. Seeing this the Cure asked: "Did he leave no word for me?"

"He knew nothing. The fever gripped his brain so that he had no sense, but—"

For the first time in his life the priest looked sternly at his servant. "Thy own sense has left thee, Remi. Tell me quick whatever thou knowest."

"My good master," Remi laid his hand on the Cure's, "I made Padre Felipe sweet and clean for his grave, as I knew thou wouldst have me do; and on his bare shoulder I saw the *fleur de lis*—the mark of a slave."

Without a word the Cure went in where the dead lay with candles burning at his head and feet, and knelt beside him.

Remi crossed himself saying a prayer for the departed soul; then he passed out in the breathless night, where the loathsome bats flew and a little gray bird sang its divine melody.—ANNE BOZEMAN LYON, in *The Poor Souls' Advocate*.

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IRISH NEWS ITEMS.

William Martin, of Killeen, has been appointed a sorting clerk in the Dublin Post office.

Kate Buckley, aged twenty-four, and residing at 9 Dominic street, Cork, died rather suddenly on the 4th ult.

Thomas McGillivuddy, of Lisanska, dropped dead whilst moving on August 4. He leaves a wife and large family.

Thomas O'Halloran, of Rineville, Quin, has been appointed to the Commission of the Peace for County Clare.

Michael Davitt has, it is stated, declared that he will decline to sit for East Kerry, but will represent South Mayo.

Lord Rathdonnell's lieutenant for County Carlow has appointed William Duckett, J.P., of Duckett's Grove, a deputy lieutenant.

A young lad named John Mahony, of Kippah, near Kinsale, died quite suddenly on August 5, without the attendance of either doctor or priest.

The death occurred on August 7, at Convent of Mercy, St. Joseph's, Longford, of Teresa, in religion Sister M. Baptist, youngest daughter of Bartholomew Quinn, of Ardagh.

The Irish Society, of Derry, have consented to allocate a large field, near the Christian Brothers' schools, to be used as an open space or playground for the children of the city.

P. McGilligan, of Coleraine, was sworn in a Justice of the Peace for County Antrim, on the 5th inst. The commission entitles him to sit at Ballymoney, Portrush, and Bushmills.

R. W. Longfield, C.E., has been appointed to the County Surveyorship of Donegal (southern division), vacant by the transfer of J. B. Ferguson to the northern division of the same county.

It is announced that Henry M. Crawford, who was the late Thomas Cunningham's assistant for a number of years, has been appointed Deputy and Acting-Clerk of the Peace for County Antrim.

E. P. O'Flanagan, son of John A. O'Flanagan, of Lisadyra, Tuam, has been appointed Auditor of the Solicitors' Apprentices Debating Society. The position is the highest in the gift of the society.

One of the last acts of Lord Chancellor Walker was the appointment of a sterling Nationalist and well-known sportsman, W. F. Mulcahy, Cappah House, to the Commission of the Peace for County Tipperary.

At the Convent of Mercy, Macroom, on July 25, Miss Anna Frances Hogan, in religion Sister Mary Dymna, daughter of the late Thomas Hogan, of Darra, Borriskane, received the black veil from Bishop Browne, of Cork.

Bishop Clancy laid the corner-stone of a new convent at Strokestown on the 28th ult. Dr. Clancy has given £100 as his first instalment toward the building fund. The magnificent site has been given by Mrs. Pakenham Mahon.

At the meeting of the Enniskillen Town Commissioners, on the 6th inst., Hugh R. Lindsay, J.P., was unanimously re-elected chairman of the board. Mr. Lindsay is a Catholic and Nationalist, while the majority of the commissioners are Protestants and Unionists.

These Meath people have died recently: August 3, at Clonard, Mary, wife of Patrick Byrne. August 3, at Oldestate, Kate, widow of the late Timothy Kenna. At Thurinstown, Beaupare, Thomas Joseph, eldest son of Matthew and Mary Reilly, aged five and a half years.

John Dunphy, of Kyle House, Rathdowney, recently appointed a justice of the peace for Queen's County, was sworn in before Laurence Thomas Kelly, on August 5. Mr. Dunphy is universally respected in Rathdowney and the district in which he lives by both rich and poor.

The Tir-nan-oge Fete, which has been promoted with the view of helping to clear off the debt on St. Joseph's Church, Galway, was opened in Eyre square, on August 1. The project of building the church was entered upon several years ago by the pastor, the Very Rev. P. J. Lally.

Laurence Maher, of Peasfield, who was one of the first that was evicted after the establishment of the Land League,

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was reinstated on August 2. He never gave up hope, though it is close on fourteen years since he was evicted, but always lived within view of the old house. The rent for which he was evicted was £24 per year. He has got back now for about half that amount.

Arthur W. H. Stanfield, son of Arthur Stanfield, of Hillsborough, has been sworn in a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Judicature in Ireland. Mr. Stanfield, who served his apprenticeship with J. Lockhart, of Lisburn, will practise in Belfast and Lisburn.

Francis O'Kane, of Dungiven, has been appointed to the Commission of the Peace for County Derry. A number of friends met at the Market House, to express their high regard for Mr. O'Kane, and to convey to him their hearty congratulations on his elevation to the magisterial bench.

Sister Mary Augustine, of the Loretto Convent, Gibraltar, died last month. She was formerly Margaret Armstrong, and was the eldest daughter of the late James Armstrong and the late Maria Sheridan, of Castlebar. Martin J. Armstrong, of Milebush, is her brother.

On the return journey of the Irish Nationalist Foresters from Dundalk, on July 28, the Dunganam and Stewartstown train was attacked at Portadown, the carriage windows completely demolished, and several persons were struck with stones. A young lad named Rice, from Stewartstown, had his eye almost destroyed. A young man from Arilboe had his head opened. Revolver shots were also discharged. At Milltown, near Dunganam, the train was again assailed by Orange rowdies and revolver shots discharged. Many persons had narrow escapes.

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