

TALES OF THE JURY ROOM

By Gerald Griffin THE THIRD JURYMANS TALE

THE KNIGHT WITHOUT REPROACH

CHAPTER I

At the time when Francis I. of heroic memory, was marching against the united forces of the Italian states, and that sovereign who in those days emphatically styled the Emperor, he was suddenly recalled to France by the revolt and desertion of the constable of Bourbon. Accordingly he returned homeward, relinquishing with regret his dream of conflicts, leaving the Milanese, which was already overrun by his troops, in the hands of the Admiral Bonivive, who was far from adding anything to what his master had already found, more than he could accomplish to retain possession of what the latter had acquired with so much ease and rapidity. His army, composed of the flower of the French chivalry, was found far less efficient than the purely defensive measures, than it had been when they rose triumphant on the very ridge of conquest, with the dauntless Francis at their head.

It was while the camp remained in this state of inactivity, that a knight, of his own will and bent, and having that in his aspect and demeanour which immediately attracted the attention and regard of the beholder, sauntered idly towards a tent, the shady interior of which looked cool and inviting in the glare of an Italian mid day sun. The heat had thinned the camp; the greater portion of the men were huddled in the which they stood, a few days before a grassy plain, was now beaten into a parched and dusty level, by the continual tramp of men and horses. Banners drooping in the noon-day air, and revealing but partial glimpses of some device renowned in history and song, distinguished the tents of the admiral of La Palice, of Suffolk, of Lorraine, D'Aubigny Chabanes, and others, whose names shed a lustre on the French nobility. In front of these a sentinal paced slowly to and fro, broiling in his heavy armour and arquebus, and occasionally giving the salute to a small group of horsemen as they galloped hastily by on some mission from the admiral, half obscured by the grey cloud which arose from the brass feet of his proceeded. At intervals one or two soldiers of the Black Bands, that infantry renowned throughout all Europe, were seen pacing leisurely along, disconcerting, in quietly murmured tones, of their past victories and the comparative merits of their leaders. Occasionally too, the shrill pipe of a viandiere, complaining of some real or feigned injustice, suff'ered in the disposal of his goods, interrupted the summer stillness of the camp.

"What sayest thou, Le Jay?" exclaimed the knight already spoken of, as he entered the tent in which a single equeiry was occupied in arranging his master's armour, "how are we to spend these scorching days in which our cautious admiral will not allow us to retreat or to advance?" "It is a heavy time indeed, my lord," replied the squire, with a modest air. "I may speak freely with thee, Le Jay," said the chevalier. "It will, I doubt, and worse than it has begun. The men are disheartened, and the confederates, as they litter in our rear, are bent on to pick up the spirits which along with other more substantial good things, we are compelled to leave behind us. Francis and Bonivive!—Fire and snow. The one by his excess of energy hurries us into the very midst of danger, and the other, who by his lack of that quality unable to take us out of it. These two extremes meet very punctually, and I fear to our grievous loss."

"I could name one," said the equeiry, "to whom it is agreed on all hands, the post of commander-in-chief might have been entrusted on this occasion with better advantage."

"And who is that Le Jay?" inquired the knight. "Why, my lord," replied the retainer, "I do not consider it safe to name him, and it is no easy matter to describe him."

"That's a strange speech for thee," interposed the chevalier. "I never yet found thee at a loss for words, whatever other deficiencies thou hast to answer for. Is it Francis de Lorraine?" "No." "No!—Le Tremouille, then?" "No." "De Suffolk?" "No." "Chabanes?—or La Palice?" "No."

"Still no! D'Aubigny, then?" "What, thou shakest that knavish head as if thou wert a fool, then, thou must perforce do thy endeavor at word-painting for my guesses are run out."

"Why, sir," said the equeiry, smoothing his neatly-trimmed beard for an instant with his hand, "it is a difficult task you set me, but it is my duty to obey. Were his temper tinged with every so slight a hue of envy, it were easy enough to sketch his portrait; but the subject is without even so much shade as might serve the purposes of contrast, without which I need not tell my gifted master, both the poet and the painter are as much at fault, as one of our Black Band would be without his arms."

graciously upon his lance, and in the next, fetch him a confessor."

"Thou wouldst have him put the steel through body and soul together if it were possible."

"It is doubtful which of the two feelings predominate in his mind, his contempt for the curia and his respect for the crown, or his veneration for the bald head and hempen girdle of a mendicant friar."

"Why, I wonder whom thou meanest, for there are few such that I know of in the camp, much less at court. But let us see a little of the shade if thou have alive with all its light. Remember we are in Italy, and it is a summer moon."

"Ah, there my pallet falls me," replied the equeiry. "What, has this paragon no fault?" "But one, that I can speak of."

"And what is that?" "The one which sometimes bears too hard a hand upon the errors of a devoted follower who would die to serve him."

"And the equeiry bowed low to his master. "Chut-chut-chut-chut; thou wert speaking of myself all this while," said the chevalier, "dost thou offend me with this matter, and speak of it no more unless to tell me thou hast succeeded; I trust all to thy discretion; of thy genius I have had proofs in many ways, so I doubt not of thy efficiency in this, and the sooner thou hast executed thy commission the better."

The third Juror here paused to replenish his tumbler, which had incessantly become exhausted since he commenced speaking. We will take advantage of the pause to close this first chapter of his narrative.

"I thought so. O that art! I could forgive anything but art and cunning. But I promise thee, clever as thou art, and simpleton as thou thinkest me, thou shalt not find me simple enough to be thy dupe."

Rosalie, who was the last person in the world to make a dupe of anybody, could only weep afresh at this new charge. "And who was this person with whom you had the heart to remain idly gossiping, while you knew that your own, feeble, widowed parent was waiting for her existence to find the means of prolonging yours at home?"

"It was Maria Pecchio." "Umph! I might have guessed as much. And what was the important subject of your conversation? No artifice, no hiding of the truth, for I should be sure to find it out. Thou knowest that when I once have got fairly a-foot to track a secret, there is not a hole in the Duchy of Milan in which it can escape me."

"Indeed, dear mother, I have no desire to hide it from you, but I do not wish to speak of it to the world. Rosalie, who was the last person in the world to make a dupe of anybody, could only weep afresh at this new charge. "And who was this person with whom you had the heart to remain idly gossiping, while you knew that your own, feeble, widowed parent was waiting for her existence to find the means of prolonging yours at home?"

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"A message for me?" Francesca exclaimed, overfrowning with sudden curiosity, as she led the equeiry to a little distance from the house.

"In the first place," said Le Jay, "the cavalier presents his respects to you and to the charming daughter, and begs that you will accept the enclosed, as a trifling mark of his esteem."

"Me, signor! me accept money from the noble — the generous cavalier! Never! never! It shall not be said that Francesca Paecheo receives money in return for the ordinary offices of hospitality."

As she uttered these words, by way of evincing her determination, she turned her back directly on the ambassador, placing one hand behind it, in order to add to the dignity of her movements, merely to prevent the mark of esteem, merely, signora," said the equeiry. "Surely you would not occasion my master so much pain, as he must feel when he hears that you have refused him?"

"And saying this in his most insinuating tones, he ventured to slip a purse into the hand of the cavalier, and with a gentle violence to close the fingers on the treasure."

"In that case indeed, signor," said Francesca, slowly withdrawing the hand as she turned gradually round, "as a mark of esteem as you say, and to avoid wounding the feelings of the dear, noble cavalier, I will accept of the purse, ere she plunged it into her capacious side pocket. "And you, signor, to lay aside your sword, and to know the miserable state of mind in which the war has left me at this moment, not saying how soon this solemn day which I speak the happiest years of my life, here the good lady laid hold of the corner of her apron, "my past into other hands, and I may be cast upon the world without a home or a resting-place."

As she said these words, she lifted the apron to her eyes and turned her head aside, to indulge her grief without restraint.

"This outrage! What a pity!" exclaimed Le Jay, with a commiserating air, "and where as you observe, signora, the happiest days of your life were spent! I am not saying how soon this solemn day which I speak the happiest years of my life, here the good lady laid hold of the corner of her apron, "my past into other hands, and I may be cast upon the world without a home or a resting-place."

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to discover those who are ashamed to beg, and to scatter his gold amongst them without being recognized."

"They may say what they will, signora, and thou mayest imagine what thou wilt, but I assure thee it was he and no other who spoke with thee in this cottage some days since, and who this day commissioned me to make on his behalf a proposal, which any rational mother in Europe would have received as one of the highest honours which fortune could bestow."

Francesca paused. Had the tempter been less estimable, she would in all probability have continued to spurn the guilty proposition of his ambassador, but the high reputation of the cavalier effected with all the arts of a known prodigal might have failed to accomplish. The horror of the offence became diminished to her eyes, when she found it recommended by so admirable an example. She did not, however, think it proper immediately to allow the alteration in her sentiments to become apparent. She consulted herself for the present, with uttering a new volley of reproaches in a somewhat less angry tone, and expressing her determination to ascertain, without loss of time, whether the unprincipled equeiry were not undoubtedly calumniating one of the noblest and most illustrious knights in Christendom. Le Jay took his departure, it being understood that he was to return on the following day, merely for the purpose of ascertaining whether Francesca had satisfied herself as to the truth of his mission, and Francesca consenting to allow him another interview with the same sacred object.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE CHAPLAIN'S VACATION A TRUE STORY

By Rev. Richard Alexander in The Missionary

It was a trying day. The chaplain of a great hospital in one of our Western cities had just finished his rounds. It was a task of several hours. Often he returned to his rooms gladdened by some special evidence of the mercy and love of the Master, but to-day he was sad and dejected. A woman had cast away the graces offered, and deliberately turned her back. In pain and suffering she surely was, but she was not turning her back to the chaplain, but defiance of God in the face of death was a phase of feeling not often met with, even in his experience. The woman had not thought of her soul—"did she have one?" was her query. And was she to die this way? The chaplain was sorely troubled. And yet, what was to be done? He could not force salvation on her poor weak brain. Only prayer remained, and she was placed among those for whom was asked forgiveness, because she knew not what she did. There was something strange and repelling about her, too, that strained the forces of Christian charity to minister to her.

The days passed on, and yet she did not die. Nay, she rallied, she improved, she convalesced, and finally recovered. She left the hospital and was swallowed up in the great stream of life that ever rushes onward. Perhaps the angels of the hospital, the prayers of the nuns, the sacrifice of the altar, followed her—who knows.

Summer came, and with it the chaplain's rest and vacation. This time it was "home," many miles away, among his native hills, where his father and mother lay in their quiet graves, where the remnant of his family welcomed him with warm greeting. It was a glad rest indeed, after all the saddest sights which his life had witnessed. One fair morning he wandered out toward the little churchyard, where the graves of his kindred lay. He paused there and whispered a requiem, with uncovered head. The wind stirred the branches of the old trees around him, and the birds twittered softly, hidden among the waving leaves. All these things he saw and heard, but he thought of those who die in the Lord, he thought, as he turned and slowly wended his way down the grassy path that led to the cemetery gate.

saw would not leave her memory. And when she went deeper into her sinful ways and picked up a young man, she inhaled, through an into jail, and having opened pneumonia, her first conscious cry was for the priest—the Catholic priest! And here he was! The very chaplain of that hospital miles distant, whom God had sent to her in her extremity. Oh! the boundless love of God!

With gentle, soothing words the priest soothed her, and explained the faith she was longing for. She pleaded for baptism. He soon saw she had not long to live, and as he always carried his stole, he took a cup of water from the table beside the bed and baptised her on the spot.

Oh! the peace that came into those troubled dark eyes! The restful face that came on that frightened face! The priest had called the nurse, who was a Catholic, as sponsor, and promised to return in the evening and instruct the dying woman for the last sacraments. The nurse was anxiously waiting, and instinctively knew at once, and believed. He left a little crucifix in her hands and departed.

He had scarcely arrived at the rectory when a messenger came flying down the street. The warden had sent the boy. He apologized for troubling the priest, but the messenger said the nurse was worse, evidently dying and begged so pitifully for the last sacraments that the nurse insisted on the second message, assuring the warden the priest would gladly come.

Taking out his oil stock and entering the chapel to place the Blessed Sacrament in his pyx was the work of a moment, and once more the priest went to the jail. Yes she was dying, but at sight of the priest she rallied and held out her hands. A little table was ready in a moment and the nurse lighted the blessed candles the priest brought. The prisoner was anointed and made her First Communion. Her faith and hope and love were miraculous.

Must we not feel that those prison walls of stone, those iron gratings lined with curious, hard, sin stained faces, were softened by the presence of unseen angels, that moved by the chords of blessed spirits that inhaled the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist? The ceremonies were over, and the end was near.

The woman had clasped her hands, and only one word trembled on her lips. "Saviour, Yes, my Saviour. Had not the good Shepherd followed her over stony paths, through briars and thorns—this one, poor, fallen, wandering sheep. She was dying in a jail—she would sleep in a pauper's grave but she was saved. Yes, saved! Oh! blessed word!—Salvation!

And so with her glowing eyes fixed on the cross she outlived passed away. Within a few hours she had been baptised, had been anointed, had received her Lord in Holy Communion, and with the last absolution trembling on the air had passed into the presence of God, saved for all eternity! Whence came all these graces? Whence the blessed spirit that inhaled the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist? The ceremonies were over, and the end was near.

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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH THE SALVATION OF SOCIETY

(Delivered in the church of St. Charles Berrou, Brooklyn, by Rev. Thos. N. Burke, O. P., in 1874 in aid of the hospital in charge of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.)

My friends: The subject which, as you know, has been announced to you, and which I purpose to treat before you this evening, is the proposition that "The Catholic Church is the Salvation of Society." Perhaps there are some amongst you who think I am an unwieldy and rash assertion. And it must be acknowledged, indeed, that for the past eight hundred years that the Catholic Church has existed, society has always endeavored to get away from her grasp, and to live without her. People who admit the action of the Church, who allow it to influence their lives—history, who let it influence their lives—if they rise to the height of their Christian elevation, if they conform themselves to the teachings of what is true, if they avail themselves of the graces of the Church—they are very often scoffed at, and called "priest-ridden and bearded people. Now-days, it is the fashion to look upon that man as the best of his class who has succeeded the most completely in emancipating himself from every control of religion, or of the Catholic Church. In one sense, it is a great advantage to shake off the influence of the Church. Such a man remains without a conscience, and without remorse. He saves himself from those moments of uneasiness and self-reproach that come to most men until they completely lose their way for God and the consequence is, that if he is a sinner, and in the way of sin, he enjoys it all the more; and he can make the more use of his time in every pathway of iniquity, if he has no obstacles of conscience or of religion to fetter him. So far, it is an advantage to be without religion. The robber, for instance, can rob more confidently if he can manage to forget that there is a God above him. The murderer can wash his hands more complacently, no matter how deeply he stains them, if there is no condemning record, no accusing voice, no ear to hear the voice of the blood that cries out against him. The consequence is, that if he is a sinner, and in the way of sin, he enjoys it all the more; and he can make the more use of his time in every pathway of iniquity, if he has no obstacles of conscience or of religion to fetter him. So far, it is an advantage to be without religion. The robber, for instance, can rob more confidently if he can manage to forget that there is a God above him. The murderer can wash his hands more complacently, no matter how deeply he stains them, if there is no condemning record, no accusing voice, no ear to hear the voice of the blood that cries out against him. 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