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"THE MONK'S LAST WORDS."

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Ash-Wednesday of the year 1649 had cast its holy sadness over Rome. The merriment of the carnival, that most charming and most childish of all Italian customs, which the northern races have darkened with scandals and debaucheries, had given place to prayer and fasting, and the solemn words, "Memento, homo, quia pulvis es: et in pulvrem revertaris." But at mid-day, in a large chamber overhanging the Tiber, five German artists might be seen sitting down to a jovial repast, which suited ill with the penitential day. The room in which they sat was one storey above the level of the river, which washed the foot of the house; three large windows opened upon the stream, now swollen and turbulent from the winter rains; and the artist to whom this apartment belonged could, without leaving his house, enjoy the quiet pleasure of angling.

Peter Van Laar, such was the artist's name, had resided in Rome for sixteen years; Poussin, Claude Lorraine, and Sandrart, were of the number of his friends; he was ill-made, even a little deformed; the length of his arms and legs gave him some resemblance to a monkey, and his whole face was covered by enormous moustaches, of which he was extremely proud, and which, curling up on each side of his nose, seemed to threaten the skies. His reputation, however, as an artist, his never-failing spirits, and a certain coarse good humor which he possessed, made up in his companions' eyes for all his external defects.

These companions, on the day in question, were Roelant and Claes Van Laar, his brothers, and John and Andrew Both, two celebrated painters of his own age; they were all disciples of Calvin. A little good sense and feeling might have taught them not openly to violate all the observances of the country which had so hospitably received them; and if they refused to own the authority of the Father of the Church, at least to obey the laws of the sovereign of Rome; and by these laws Ash-Wednesday is a day of abstinence. But they were used to follow their own ways unmolested, and the table was loaded with viands left from the feast of the day before, in the midst of which appeared triumphantly a splendid Tyrolean ham.

"Before we begin," said Andrew Both, "Peter shall play us a tune on his violin; a stirring tune, to wake us up a little and give us an appetite."

The rest eagerly backed his proposal, and Peter, who required no pressing, began with twisting his extraordinary figure and features into every kind of grimace to the tune of a burlesque dance, which was much applauded. At mid-day the five boon companions began their dinner with shouts of laughter, and a noise and confusion which predicted shattered glasses, if not a fray, before the end of the repast.

"We are really too bad to make such a noise," said Peter; "we must respect the customs of the country. What a stillness there is all around us!"

"Bah! nonsense!" answered Roelant; "we are not superstitious—every one knows it; artists are privileged. Just fill my glass again!"

And the noise increased every instant. By four o'clock the five artists were all more or less intoxicated, and the chamber rang with the jingling of glasses and with their hoarse voices mingling in the most horrible curses, in impious jests and ribald songs.

It happened that a good Franciscan monk, passing the house, heard this hubbub; and fearing that a violent quarrel was going on, he hastened in to make peace. Directed by the noise, he approached the door, opened it, and started back bewildered at the scene before him.

"Come in, father!" roared out John Both, insolently; "you look like a rare model. Come and take a draught;" and as the monk stood still, he pulled him roughly forward to the table.

"Gentlemen," said the monk gravely, "I thought I was coming among Christians; but I see I was mistaken."

"As much of Christians as your yourself, old man!" answered Roelant, holding him back as he tried to leave the room; "and none the less, either, for eating a slice of ham."

"What nourishes the body kills not the soul," said John Both, in a tone of drunken solemnity.

"You are not quite in a state to reason, dear brothers," said the monk, gently; "but were you so, all I should say would be, when Mother Church commands, her children have only to obey. What is more worthless than a disobedient family, or a rebellious army? And besides, as you well know, it is not the food which we consider sinful, but the want of submission to lawful authority."

"The monk means to insult us," said Andrew, in a tone which was becoming sulen.

"No, my brethren, but I pity you; and on this holiday I beg you not to give this scandal. Remember that it is, against the laws of the

country; and that if, instead of me, any one in authority had seen you, you might have been imprisoned for a fortnight."

"He is right, he is quite right; let us leave the table," said Peter, in some alarm.

"No, no, that we will not!" cried Roelant; "though I am rather frightened, too," he added sarcastically, "if, as you say, he be right in what he says. Claes, bolt the door; John, hold the reverend father's feet."

"Who knows," suggested Andrew, "but we might be banished from Rome? We are Calvinists."

At these words a look of pain shot over the monk's calm face, and he tried to escape; but he was held too firmly. "We will take care," said Claes, "that the monk does not betray us. Ah, I see how to manage that! Fill up the glasses, Roelant; we'll drink the good gentleman's health—and, John, just cut him a slice of ham."

This suggestion was received with loud laughter and applause.

But over the gentle, simple face of the poor Franciscan came a wonderful dignity. With the hand which was free he declined the ham, which they tried to force upon him; and, when his persecutors had drunk his health, with every kind of mockery and insult, he said, "If you are indeed aliens from the Holy Roman Church, I can only pray for you and weep over you; I cannot blame you. But remember that I, her faithful son, think this which you would make me do a grievous sin."

"No matter! no matter! the greybeard shall do as we bid him," shrieked Roelant, thumping the table with his fist till all the glasses rang.

"He shall!" Claes rejoined; and he tried to force a morsel of ham through the closed teeth of the monk, who drew back in horror.

And then began a fearful scene—a scene which no pen can describe. Night was fast closing in; a stormy wind had arisen, and had burst open the window. The five artists looked in their rage and drunkenness more like demons than men; and the holy monk, the object of their satanic fury. Now held down in a chair, now pushed upon the tables, now knocked down, and then dragged up again almost stunned, yet firm in his resolve, he saw only furious eyes glaring at him, and heard nothing but curses, threats, and insults. Andrew Both held wine to his lips—Roelant tried to press the piece of meat upon him. Peter Van Laar, more sober, and uneasy at the wildness of his comrades, tried to persuade him to yield. Claes continued his endeavors to force open his mouth; the monk silently resisted, and at every moment's pause, his prayer rose up: "Dear Lord, deliver me, and pardon them!"

When this disgraceful scene had lasted for half-an-hour, Van Laar, the only reasonable one of the party, tried to restrain his companions.—"This is too bad," he said; "let the poor wretch go, if he will first swear not to betray us."

"Impossible!" said Claes. "After all this, we are too much compromised; he may now accuse us of assault. No, no! he shall sin with us, or else he shall make acquaintance [with our daggers.]"

He drew his weapon as he spoke: and all followed his example except Van Laar, who cried, "What, murder! know you not 'tis murder you are contemplating? Will you become assassins? You are ruining yourselves for ever!"

The daggers were arrested by this vehement address, and the monk was able to say: "Tho' you have left the Church, gentlemen, you still hold to the Bible. God sees you! and it is He who has said: 'Whosoever smites with the sword shall perish by the sword.'"

"He speaks truth!" exclaimed Van Laar, in an agony of remorse and fear. "Down with the poniards. I will have no murders or murderers in my house."

"The Tiber! yes, the Tiber!" cried Claes, whose drunken fury was unchecked; and, leaping on the window-seat, he dragged the poor Franciscan towards it.

"The monk will betray us!" said Andrew Both. "He will deliver us up to the Inquisition!" added John and Roelant; and thus, lashing themselves into a rage, they pulled and pushed their victim to the window.

"My God!"—began the holy man; but his dying prayer was drowned in the howling of the storm; and in another moment a heavy splash in the river beneath told that malice and impiety had done their worst.

Van Laar had taken no part in the crime, though he had not moved a finger to prevent it. He leaned for some minutes from the window; but seeing only the black stormy night, he closed it hastily and turned to his companions, who had flung themselves on different seats, exhausted.

A long quarter of an hour elapsed in gloomy silence. Van Laar was the first to break it.

"What have you done?" he said.

Claes alone could find courage enough to answer.

"It is an untoward event, no doubt," said he; "but at least we have nothing now to fear."

"Nothing," rejoined Van Laar, "if the crime be not discovered!"

"The crime!" repeated the rest, looking on each other with a kind of terror; and they relapsed into their gloomy thoughts.

Moody and sad, the five artists went to their homes, thinking no longer of merriment or feasting. Instead of seeking each other out as before, they avoided each other with horror. Even when the Franciscan's body had been found, and they were certain that no suspicion was attached to them, nothing could banish the cloud from their brow; and Van Laar soon announced that business of importance obliged him to return to Germany. The others also declared that they too would leave Rome, which was now become hateful to them; and they all began preparing for departure.

"It is well, at least," said Van Laar, "that you did not dip your hands in his blood; for, remember, 'He who smiteth with the sword shall perish by the sword.' He said it, and the words of a dying man are terrible!"

"Bah!" said Claes, angrily; "superstition! tales to frighten children with! According to that, we ought all to be drowned."

He burst into a wild laugh: but it found no echo from his companions; their countenances only grew more gloomy, and they rose abruptly, saying, "Do not talk of it: let us go—the sooner the better."

The next day the five friends dispersed. Claes Van Laar started for the villa of a Roman noble, who owed him a large sum for some pictures he had painted for him. He was riding on a mule, and in passing a bridge which joined two rocks the mule slipped, and Claes was hurled into a torrent formed by the late violent rains. The body of his drowned brother was carried to Peter, who was packing up for his journey. After the funeral he set out for Holland, with his friend John Both.

Roelant and Andrew Both had started in a fit of strange melancholy, the one for Genoa, the other for Venice. Neither of them was destined to see his native land again. Six months later, Peter Van Laar received the news that his brother had drowned himself at Genoa.

In the spring of the following year, John Both, when opening his studio at Utrecht, read in a packet received from Italy the account of his brother Andrew's accidental death by drowning at Venice.

Horror and remorse at the sight of this manifest judgment of God seemed to deprive the miserable man of his senses. Overwhelmed with agony and despair, he rushed out of his studio and through the streets like a maniac, and flung himself into the Rhine.

Of all the guilty associates, Peter Van Laar alone remained. He who had once been the gayest of the gay now dragged on a miserable existence, a burden to himself and to all around him; wasting in gloom and in vain brooding over the past the time which God seemed to allow him, as having been the least guilty, for repentance and amendment. But the long-suffering God does not always wait: He may continue standing at the door, and may knock again and again, and though as often unheeded, may as often repeat His calls; but there comes a moment when He lingeringly withdraws, and, albeit willing to return, returns no more. The sinner is left to his own weak will and the goadings of the evil spirit within him. And so it was with this remorseful but unrepenting man, for on Ash-Wednesday, in the year 1673, his cook having served up a ham at dinner, Peter Van Laar sprang up with a cry of agony, rushed from the house, and drowned himself.

Truly the monk's last words had received a terrible fulfilment.

God's vengeance against murder has become a proverb among men; and at times He visibly punishes less heinous sins in this life, as though to vindicate even here His everlasting sovereignty, and to disclose to His creatures something of those tremendous judgments which are reserved for the impatient in the world to come.

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON THE CATHOLIC CHAPLAINS FOR THE ARMY IN INDIA.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

The policy about to be adopted in India, in reference to our army, has already received the universal approval of public opinion in this country. The Sepoy regiments will be diminished by two-thirds, and the money thus saved by their reduction will be expended in maintaining an additional European force. This arrangement will inspire the natives with the conviction of the superior power of the British in the Peninsula, and will thus permanently crush any secret organization or overt combination of future mutiny. It is therefore contemplated to raise at least forty thousand men to replace one hundred thousand

Sepoys so removed; and as a further security for British dominion and commercial prosperity, it is intended to substitute the direct government of the English cabinet (as in Canada), for the indirect, tortuous, incapable rule of the imbecile East India Company. The melancholy events of the last six months on the banks of the Jumna might have been averted, if a carelessness, a blundering which has no parallel in military absurdities had not been persevered in, in the teeth of remonstrances from every part of the empire: and when to the scenes at Cawnpore, to the deaths from cholera, to the disasters from sunstroke and over-marching, to the obstinate insensibility and bigotry of Lord Canning, we add our other official mistakes at the Crimea, it must be admitted that Great Britain has killed more of her own men by her palpable blundering, than have been carried off by the steel or the cannon of the enemy.

In order to remedy these gross deficiencies in our civil and military departments, new laws have been framed, and an improved routine has been adopted. Long gunboats have been built, competitive examinations have been suggested, superior merit has been encouraged. Young officers have now a hope of command, and old worn-out senility can no longer hold the reins of warfare with one foot in the stirrup and the other in the grave. With the bravest army in the world, England has been sadly deficient in the number of first rate competent commanders; and while the marshals, the generals and the field officers are counted by hundreds, England, according to the due proportion of her military population, has been confined in reference to her commanders to some few old men of even doubtful strategical talent. This whole system has brought disgrace on our otherwise unrivalled military renown, and it has tarnished our reputation in civil administration. Universal revision and alteration are now sanctioned by not only the voice of the nation, but by the highest official names in the world; and hence while all must deplore the past losses of life and national character, which resulted from a stupid adherence to an old and stupid routine, all must now rejoice that an advanced plan of civilization will cover our mistakes, and place us on a level with the more improved administrative genius and practice of the surrounding countries.

Whilst, therefore, new military stocks are made for the necks of the soldiers, new shakos for their heads adopted, new patterns of uniform executed, new gunboats built, new field manoeuvres performed, new examinations planned, new schemes of commissariat carried out, and a new universal improved officiality practised, it will be naturally asked if there be contemplated in high quarters any new improved arrangement for equal liberties of religion in the army. Is the Protestant, the Presbyterian, the Catholic soldier on an equality as regards the profession of their faith, the maintenance of their religion and the education of their children? They are all clothed in the same uniform, receive the same pay, stand in the same ranks, fight for the monarch, and with the same courage spill their blood in the same cause. Surely, if they are equal in their military associations, they ought not to be made inferior in their religious character; if the Protestant and the Presbyterian have their Government chaplains, why should not the Catholic have his priest? and if the Queen pay a necessary stipend to the one, why not pay an equal sum to the other? The Catholics are grateful to the British Constitution for even granting the toleration which they now enjoy; but they can never be satisfied perfectly as long as the mark of inferiority is affixed to their faith, either by not allowing an appointed chaplain where other creeds are supplied; or by granting to their priest a pension which is inadequate to his decent support, and which places him below the level of the lowest civil clerk in the Indian service. If the Government give a Catholic surgeon the same pay as his Protestant medical companion, where is the principle in withholding from the Catholic of the Gospel the allowance granted to the Protestant clergyman? And if the Government grant any sum for the priest's support, where is the logic or the religious principle in not making it equal to the allowance of the Protestant chaplain? If Government toleration grant in some few instances ten pounds a month to the priest, while it gives the varied sums of £50, £60, £70, and in some instances £100 per month to the Protestant minister; if Government toleration at all admit the principle it must be the Government bigotry which makes the difference in the pay. And if the small pay of £10 be the measure of the toleration, and if the sum withheld—viz., £100—be the criterion of the bigotry, it will follow that the bigotry of the Horse Guards is ten times the amount of its toleration. I have already stated what I know to be true—viz., that Ireland is grateful for receiving any instalment of its national rights; but as long as England publishes a beggarly insult in her army on her brave Catholic soldiers, she tells

trumpet-tongued her own religious animosity to all nations, and she inflicts a cruel injustice and an unmerited disgrace on the unflinching courage and the invincible breasts of her faithful Catholic subjects. England gains and saves some few pounds by this intolerant, unjust, mercenary conduct; but she loses at the same time a national name, and stamps her parchment laws with the brand of a national lie. If England demand the services, the military science of the Catholics of Ireland in India, she might as well call on them to pay for their uniform as to pay for their religious worship, while in her employment: if she takes them from home to a foreign Pagan land, without a provision for their creed, she robs them of their dearest inheritance with a cruel injustice not known in the other countries of Europe.

With what a pleasing contrast the Irish Catholic reads the laws of Catholic France in reference to the point at issue. This law of France should be written on the entrance of the British Senate House and of the London Horse Guards, France, Catholic France, grants a Government pension of £120 a year to the Protestant parish rector of her country, while she gives only £40 a year to the Catholic curate, and £80 a year to the Catholic priest! Here is an example of toleration which puts England to shame; and which, like a lofty pillar, raises its proud head within twenty miles of Dover, in sight of the English coast, as an imperishable, glorious monument of the wide Christian toleration of France, as contrasted with the religious fanaticism and the intolerant rancor of Great Britain.

Now that our armies in the East will be increased by an additional force of fifty thousand men, it is to be hoped that, as past blunders in our civil and our military departments will be revised and improved, our religious position will not be forgotten. Common sense, justice, and religion all unite in urging on the Government the claims of Catholic Ireland in this respect; and they demand, as a matter of right, that if their bodies are clothed, fed and protected by the national laws, their souls will not be left to perish or taught and provided for by "alms collected by the Propagation of the Faith in France, or by means subscribed by the already impoverished people of Ireland.

D. W. C.

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON THE EXTERMINATION OF THE IRISH SMALL FARMERS.

(From the Dublin Catholic Telegraph.)

Within the last fortnight the usual announcement has been made in the newspapers of the eviction of twenty-four families in the county Dublin: and of fifteen families in the county Cavan! According to the average number of persons in Irish families, usually six individuals in each, we have thus thirty-nine families, or two hundred and thirty-four human beings, made homeless by law, and flung by constitutional cruelty into defenceless and pitiable destitution. These few victims of landlord caprice cannot, in this year of grace, awaken the slightest sympathy in the public mind. When the millions of the expelled Irish, during the ten years that are passed, did not excite the remorse or the mercy of the aristocracy; or move our Parliament to a protecting legislation in their regard, how can the contemptible number of two or three hundred Irish bodies and souls warm into active justice or charitable benevolence the commiseration of the rulers of Ireland? Similar national woes have been so often told since the year 1847 that the cries of the poor, homeless, exterminated Irish are now perfectly unheeded: they die in the crowded cellar, or they dwindle to the grave in the poorhouse prison, or they survive for some years the horrors of the emigrant ship, the hardship of labor in a foreign land, and the brokenheartedness of persecution; but their life and death in the eyes of the Legislature is of much less legal concern than the death of a fox or a snipe.

It is even unfashionable in genteel society to allude to cases of landlord eviction: you are met at once by quotations from the statements of cattle shows, the registry of agricultural statistics, the census of the Irish inferior animals: and the subject on hand—namely, the eviction of thousands of men, women, and children—is sought to be stifled under an enormous heap of turnips and mangold wurzel which have been produced during the past year! Surely no man in his senses would attempt to justify the crime of murder because we have now in Ireland more bullocks than we had in the year of the Rebellion of '98; and decidedly no man, except a very monster, can defend the banishment of hundreds of human beings (with the rent in their hands), merely because the live stock and the green crops of the Irish Aristocracy, fed and grown on the evicted holdings of former expelled poor, are flourishing in unexampled abun-