

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

GIENANAAR

A STORY OF IRISH LIFE

BY VERY REV. CANON P. A. SHEEHAN, D.D.,
AUTHOR OF "MY NEW CURATE," "LUKE
DELMAGE," "UNDER THE CEDARS
AND THE STARS," "LOST ANGEL
OF A RUINED PARADISE," ETC.

CHAPTER IX.

NODLAG.

Christmas morning came round; and the snow was still heavy in cleft and hollow; whilst on the open roads it had been beaten by many feet of men and horses into a sheet of yellow ice that made walking very troublesome and dangerous. The great white sheet was yet drawn across the landscape to the horizon; and on distant mountains it shone clear as amber in the light of the wintry sun. The eyes of men were yearning for the more soothing green color of field and copse; for in this country, where we are so unaccustomed to snow, the eyes soon begin to ache at the dazzling whiteness, and seek relief in little spots or nooks of verdure under the shade of trees, or in hidden places where the great crystal flakes could not penetrate.

The family had gone to early Mass, some to Ardpatrick or Ballygarran, some down to their own parish church; for, despite the inclement weather, there was some pleasure in meeting friends on such a day, and exchanging Christmas greetings. The boys who had been home early from Mass went out with their sticks to hunt the wren, and Hy, Drolene! echoed from copse and thicket, as the young lads shouted the hunting cry far away across the mountains. The rest of the family got back early from Mass also, and the deep hush of a Christmas Sabbath fell swiftly down over the entire land, for it was a matter of honor in Ireland that each family should be swiftly gathered together, and have their fireside consecrated against all intrusion on that day. So far is this rigid tradition maintained that it is most rare to find any one sitting down to the Christmas dinner who is not an immediate member of the family circle; and the happy-go-lucky intimacy of other days, when a neighbor might freely cross the threshold with a "God bless the work!" is sternly interdicted on that day. The strict privacy of each household is rigidly maintained.

When night fell, all gathered together around the table, where smoked the Christmas dinner. This, too, was invariable in every Irish household. The roast goose, stuffed with potatoes and onions, the pig's head, garlanded with curly cabbage, a piece of salt beef, and an abundance of potatoes, was, and is, the never-changing menu in these humble, but so full of life, places where there is a little more pretension, a rice pudding, plentifully sprinkled with currants, or a plum pudding, is in much request. And then the decks are cleared for action; and the great Christmas cake, black with raisins, is surrounded and steamed by smoking tumbler of punch; and all relax for a cozy, comfortable evening of innocent mirth and enjoyment around the glowing fire of turf and logs, on the sacred hearths of Ireland. And there are songs and dances galore, and absolute fraternity and equality, for the family on this great holiday of Christmas communion; and many a quaint story is told and many a quaint legend is unearthed, as the memory of the old travels back into the past, and the hopes of the young leap forward to the future. And all then was limited between the four seas of Ireland; America had not yet been discovered; and the imagination never travelled beyond the circle of the seas. And talk about nothing but Ireland! Ireland, the Ireland of the past so dark, so tragic, so uncertain and problematical.

Late in the evening, or rather night, in this little home of Gienanaar, the thoughts of the family took a melancholy turn. The song had been sung, the story told; the girls and boys were tired after jig and reel, and the whole family circle were gathered around the fire now smouldering down in hot cinders and white ashes. The dim, crimson light pre-empted them to meditation and even gloom, as the huge giant shadows were cast on the walls and shadows of the blackened rafters glistered under the dark, smoked-begrimed thatch. After a long silence, the vanthees, Mrs. Connors, with her hands folded upon her lap, said, looking intently at the fire: "I hope we'll all be well and happy, this time twelvemonth! Sure 'tis little we know what's before us! We'd ever think last Christmas that we'd see what we saw this evening!" "There's no use in divining" it up to-night, Bess," said the old man. "The coming year, and every year of our lives, is in the hands of God!" "Thru' for you," said the vanthees, "But sure, how can we help talkin' about what our hearts are full of?" "Tis all over now," said her husband, spreading his hands before the embers. "At last, we may hope so. As long as the Counsellor is in the fore, the people are safe."

"You never know," said her wife, whose feminine instincts inclined to despondency. "It's clear as noon day, that there's thin in the country still that 'ud swear black was white, and night was day." "Until they're made sich an example of," said a deep voice from the settle, "that no wan of their seed, breed, or generation shall be left to swear away honest lives again."

"They say," added another of the boys, "that Clompper Daly (Clompper Dawley is the name by which the famous informer is still spoken of in the parish), is sported away already; but the other ruffian is under thralin' agin be the police in Dublin to swear harder the next time."

"They're to be pitied, the poor, misfortunate crachures," said Edmond Connors. "It must be hard times that druv them to such a trade."

"Wisha, thin, father," said one of the girls, who could make bolder on her parents than her brothers, "I wish

you'd keep your pity for them that deserve it better. Hard times, indeed! As if anything could excuse wholesale perjury and murder!"

"You have your feelings, Kate," said the old man, "and sure I don't blame you. 'Twould be a lonesome Shrove for you, if Willy Burke hadn't done what he done."

This allusion to Kate's approaching marriage with John Burke only exasperated her the more.

"Yes, father," she said, "but as Donal here sez, what protection have any of ye, so long as any of that dirty spawn of informers is left in the country?"

"'Twas a brave ride, surely," said the old man, not heeding. "I hard Dr. O'Brien say from the altar, that in a hunder' or two hunder' years' time, there'll be ballads and songs about it."

"You hard him say, too," said Kate, flushed and excited with the dance, and the thought of her lover's peril thus brought back to her mind, "that he hoped every approver and informer would clear out of his parish, and have no trace behind them in wife or child."

"Go out, Donal," said the old man, not relishing this turn the conversation was taking, "an' bring in a creel of dhry turf and fagots for the fire. Sure we have some hours yet before bed-time, and the sight of the fire is good." And, he continued, turning around, as Donal promptly obeyed, "take a look at the cows in the stalls, and see they're all right agin the night. It is as cowld for them crachures as it is for ourselves."

Donal, a "boy" of thirty-five or forty, went out into the keen frosty air; and first approached the outhouse where the wood was kept. Having collected a goodly bundle, he went over to the great long rack of black turf, now blanketed under a heap of frozen snow. He could not find the usual creel; so, lighting a stable lantern, he went over to the byre where the cattle were stalled for the night. Three of the beasts were comfortably asleep in their stalls; the remaining three bent down their wet nozzles, and breathed on something that lay on the floor. Surprised beyond measure, Donal went over, and stooping down saw his turf-creel, and lying therein, warmed and saved by the breath of the dumb oxen, was the sweetest and prettiest child he ever saw. The little creature opened its blue eyes at the lantern light, and stared and smiled at its discoverer. The cows drew back. Their services were no longer wanted. But one came back from the stalls; and, as if loath to leave its little charge, put down its wet nose again, and breathed the warm vapor of breath on the infant.

The big Donal was so surprised that, as he said, you could knock him down with a feather. But, leaving the lantern on the floor, he came over leisurely to the house, smiling at the surprise he was going to give the family. Then he stopped a moment, debating with himself what would be the most dramatic form in which he could make the revelation. Like a good artist he finally decided that the simplest way would be the most effective; so he pushed open the kitchen door, and said:

"Come here, Kate, I want you a minit."

"Wisha, thin," said Kate, reluctant enough to leave the warm house and go out into the frosty air, "tis you're always wantin' somethin'. What is it now?"

When they were in the yard, Donal said to her:

"Keep yer sinses about you, Kate, for you'll see the queerest thing you ever saw."

"Yerra, what is it," said Kate, now quite excited, "is it a ghost or wan of the 'good people'?"

"Tis a fairy whatever," said Donal, going over and letting the light fall down on the smiling face of the child. "Did ye ever see the likes before? What'll they say inside?"

Kate uttered a little scream of surprise, and clasped her hands.

"Glory be to God! Did any wan ever see the likes before? I wander is it something good, or—"

The dumb beast rebuked her superstitious, for again she bent down her wet mouth over the child and breathed softly over her. And the infant, as if appealing against the incredulity of the girl, twisted and poked its little face, as if about to cry.

"Here," said Donal, "ketch a grip of the creel, and let us take the crachure into the fire. And I suppose she's starvin'."

The brother and sister lifted the basket gently, and leaving the lantern behind them, took the infant across the snow-covered yard, and pushed open the kitchen door.

"Here's a Christmas box for ye that we found in the stable," said Donal, with great delight. "Begobs, whoever sint it made no mistake about it. She's a rare little jewel."

The whole family rose, except Edmond Connors, who kept his place by the fire. He was always proof against sudden emotions of all kinds. They gathered around the basket which Donal and Kate brought over to the fire; and there was a mingled chorus of wonder, surprise, anger, pity, as the little creature lay there before them, so pretty, so helpless, so abandoned.

"Glory be to God this blessed and holy night, did any wan ever hear the like before?"

"T'will be the talk of the three parishes before Sunday!"

"Wisha, who could it be at all, at all? Sure that child is six months old."

"Sweet bad luck to the mother that abandoned ye, ye poor little angel from heaven! Sure she must have a heart of stone to put ye from her breast this cowld, bitter night!"

"Wisha, I wander who is she? Did ye hear of any child about the neighborhood belonging to any poor, misfortunate crachure?"

The only member of the family who did not evince the least surprise was Edmond Connors himself. He continued staring at the little wail that

lay at his feet, blinking up at him with her clear, blue eyes, as the ruddy flames from the wood and turf now leaped up merrily again. He at once recognized the child whom he had seen in the arms of the half-demented creature who had accosted him on the bridge; and he remembered, and smiled at the remembrance, how easily he had implored her to commit that child to the care of some Christian household, who, for the love of God, would preserve the little life and cherish it.

The vanthees, at last, impatient at his silence, said:

"Wisha, thin, Edmond Connors, wan would think ye warn't in yer own house, ye're so silent, sittin' there and twirlin' yer thumbs, and with yer well! Well! Can't you say somethin' to relieve our feelin'?"

"I think," said the old man, deliberately, and with a little chuckle of amusement, "that it 'ud be no barrum if ye warmed a little sup of milk and gave it to the crachure."

"Thru' for you, faith," said his wife. "You always sez the right thing, Edmond Connors, if you don't say much!"

The milk was warmed; and the little creature drank it eagerly, and brightened up after its simple supper. And then began an eager search in its clothes for some sign or token of its birth or parentage. This was unavailing. The little garments were clean, and sound, and warm; but no scrap of paper nor sign of needle afforded the least indication of who the child was, or whence it had come. And the uncertainty gave rise to a warmer debate about the religion of the child, and whether she had been christened, and what might be her name.

"Ay, course, she's christened," said one of the girls. "Ay she was the blackest Protestant in Ireland, she'd have her child baptized."

"Begor, that's true," said another. "An' faith, it might be some fine lady that's tired of her little baby."

"Nonsense!" broke in Mrs. Connors. "There's not a decent woman in the land would abandon her child like that."

"Take my word for it," said one of the servant girls, "the mother that carried that child is no great things. Perhaps 'twas that mad 'uman who was around here a couple of weeks ago."

"The mad 'uman!" said Edmond Connors, for the first time, turning around. "What mad 'uman?"

"Some poor angashore with a crachure, their services were no longer wanted. But one came back from the stalls; and, as if loath to leave its little charge, put down its wet nose again, and breathed the warm vapor of breath on the infant."

"And had she a child wid her?" asked the old man innocently.

"We don't know. She had some bundle in her arms whatever. But we thought she was gettin' up for the Christmas time. But whoever she was, she was no great things. We wor glad when she took her face off of us."

"But what are we to do with the child, at all, at all?" asked one of the girls. "And why did her misfortune mother pick us out to lave her with us?"

"I suppose she thought we'd keep her," said her mother.

"And won't you?" said the old man, looking at the child and the fire.

"Won't we? Did any wan hear sich a question?" said Mrs. Connors. "Faith, I'm sure we won't. Nice business we'd have rearing a child that might be ill got. We're enough to do, faith, those times to keep ourselves, with everythin' threatenin' around us. We'll take her down, next Sunday, please God, to the priest, and let him see after her."

"And why should the priest do what Christians refuse to do?" said the old man. "Why should he have the burden of rearin' her?"

"He can put her in somewhere," said his wife. "An' perhaps, there may be some lone crachure who'd take her of his hands for a thrife."

"Thin you won't throw her out amongst the cows to-night?" said the old man, earnestly.

"That's a queer question," said his wife. "Yerra, what's comin' over you at all? Sure you used to be as fond of childre' as their mother. But we'll keep her a few days; and thin—"

"What night is this, Bess?" asked the old man, rising up, and speaking solemnly, his back to the fire and his hands clasped tightly behind him.

There was something in the tone assumed by the old man that hushed the whole place instantly into silence. He so suddenly manifested any sign of authority that, when he spoke as he now did, his words came weighted with all the earnestness of a power that was seldom asserted. His wife, who, in ordinary every-day life, was supreme mistress and ruler of the establishment, bore her momentary detraction badly. She shuffled about uneasily, and affected to be very busy about household affairs.

"I suppose 'tis a Christmas," she replied without turning round, and in a very sulky tone.

"And do you remember what happened on this blessed night?" he said, now removing his hat and placing it on the sugar chair where he had been sitting.

"I suppose I do," she answered. "The Infant Jaysus was born in the stable of Bethlehem. Have ye any more of the Catechism in yer head?"

"And I suppose," said the old man, "that if poor woman and her husband (God forgive me for speaking of the Blessed Virgin and holy St. Joseph in that way) kem to the dure with their little child a few nights after, and asked Bess Connors to take the baby from them for a while, Bess Connors would say: 'Next dure, honest 'uman!'"

"You know very well, Edmond Connors," said his wife, now thoroughly angry, "that Bess Connors" would do nothing of the kind."

"I know you long enough, Bess," said the old man, "to know that. But with God sint this little crachure, here he stooped down and took the

smiling child up in his great arms, "do you think He sint it as a sign and token of nothin'? And whin the same all-merciful God saved me from the gallows and a grave in Cork gaol, where I might be rotting to-night, instid of bein' here amongst ye, wouldn't it be a nice return to grow out this little orphan into the cowl'd, hard wurld outside? No!" he said with emphasis. "If God has been good to us let us be tinder wid wan another."

There was no reply to this. The young men would have liked to side with their father, but they were afraid of their mother's keen tongue. The girls were bolder; and the elder, Joan, or Joannas, a very gentle, spiritual being, said meekly:

"I think father is right, mother. We mustn't fly in the face of God."

"Here," said the mother, completely conquered, "let ye nurse her betune ye. I wash me hands out of the business intirely."

"Take the child, Joan," said the father, handing the infant over to his eldest daughter. "So long as there's a bit, bite and sup in the house, she shall not want, until thin that owns her, claims her."

"Do so, and nurse her betune ye, and may she bring a blessing on yer house, Edmond Connors," said his wife. "But av it be the other way, remember that ye got yer warning."

"What will we call her?" said Joan, taking the infant from her father's arms. "We must christen her agin be some name or another."

"We'll call her Bessie for the present," said the old man. "The last honor we can pay yer mother."

"Be this be that ye want," said his wife in a furious temper. "I had always a decent name, an' me family before me wor decent, an' I never brought shame or blame on thin—"

"Here, here," said Donal, to end the discussion, "anything will do. Call her Nodlag, (Pronounced Nulug—Irish for Christmas,) after this blessed night."

And Nodlag remained the child's name.

CHAPTER X.

THE MIDNIGHT OATH.

The defeat of the Crown in these half-political, half-social trials had been so utter and complete, that it was generally regarded as the merest formality that the prisoners, let out on bail, should be again summoned before the Judges. Besides, the belief in O'Connell's great forensic abilities, so well manifested before the Special Commission, created a hope that the public mind, that no matter what pressure was brought to bear by the Crown, no jury could convict on what had already been proved to be the perjured and suborned evidence of approvers. In fact, it was fully believed by the general public, that the Crown would not renew the prosecution. Hence, during the months of January and February, great contentment reigned in the humble cottage at Gienanaar.

The early spring sun shone on an usual, almost gleaming day, and the brightness that always shone around that peaceful Christian hearth. Nodlag, too, was a ray of sunshine across the earthen floor. Gradually she grew into all hearts, and even the vanthees, struggling a long time against her pride of power so rudely shattered on Christmas night, yielded to the spell of enchantment cast by the founding over all else. The men of the household never went out to work, or to careen for Nodlag; the girls went alone mad about the child; and often, when no one was looking, the vanthees would remain a long time by the child's cradle, talking motherly nonsense to it, and always winding up with the comment:

"'Twas a quare mother that put you amongst the bastes a Christmas night, alanna!"

Edmond Connors, too, was completely fascinated by her childish charms. He would go in and out of the room where her cradle lay, and careen her, and when she was brought near the fire, and he could look at her, long and leisurely, he would plunge into a deep meditation on things in general, and wind up with a "Well, well, it is a quare wurld sure enough!" But the secret of her abandonment and her parentage was jealously guarded by him. He knew well that if he so much as hinted that that winsome child was the daughter of the perjured ruffian, Daly, who had tried to clear away his life, and who had sent her away to transportation, not even his supreme authority would avail to save the child from instant and peremptory dismissal from that house.

When he found the secret safe, for all the inquiries made in the neighboring parishes failed to elicit any information about the child or its parents, although it was still the common talk of the people, he often chuckled to himself at the grim joke he was playing in his own mind, as he saw his daughter fondling the child, and his sons kissing her—"If ye only knew!"

Then, sometimes, there would come a sinking of heart as he thought of the possibilities that might eventuate from his approaching trial, and the significant hint from the wretched woman:—"An' isn't the rope swingin' for ye a-yet?"

At last, the Spring Assizes came around; and the three men, Connors, Wallis, and Lynch, were ordered to Court for trial. It was a surprise; and still regarded as a mere matter of form. The Solicitor General, Doherty, was again to prosecute; and he came flushed from the triumph over O'Connell in the House of Commons, and determined to prove by the conviction of his prisoners that the famous Conspiracy was as deadly, and as deeply spread as he had represented. Public interest was not so keen as on the first trials at the Special Commission; and therefore, that secret and undefined pressure of public opinion did not lean so heavily on judges and jury. The prisoners were not aware of this; but came into court with hope high in their

hearts that this was but a mere formality to be gone through to comply with the law. They would be acquitted by the Solicitor General himself in his opening speech.

As they passed into the dock to surrender to their bail, Edmond Connors was aware of the dark figure of a woman, clad in black, and with a black shawl tightly drawn about her head, as she stood so close to the door that her dress touched him lightly. The young man on guard apparently did not notice her, or made no attempt to remove her from a place usually occupied by officials. As her dress touched the old man, he looked down; and she, opening her black shawl, revealed the pallid face and the great wild eyes of the woman he had accosted on the bridge. At first he shuddered at the contact. Then, some strange influence told him that it was with no evil intention she was there. Yet, his thoughts began to wander wildly, as his nerves sank under the fierce words of the indictment, charging him with intent and conspiracy to murder; and the words of the woman would come back:—"An' isn't the rope swingin' for ye a-yet?"

To their utter dismay and consternation, too, O'Connell, their champion, their deliverer, did not appear; but there was the arch-enemy, Doherty, "six feet three in height, and with a manner decidedly aristocratic." On went the dreadful litany of their imputed crimes; on went the appeals to prejudice, sectarian and political; all the more terrible for the passionless tones in which it was uttered, and alas! there was no stern friend here to cry, "Stop! That is not law!"

Counsel exchanged notes, looked up, hesitated; but it needed the fearless and masculine tribune to block that stream of deadly eloquence. Over-awed by the position and personality of the Crown Prosecutor, and afraid to get into close contact with him, they were silent. And then the approvers came on the table.

It would seem to ordinary minds incredible that the evidence of these ruffians, completely disproved on the score of self-contradiction, and rejected by the mixed jury at the Special Commission, should ever be demanded again. But it was. The scene in that Rathclaire, the document of assassination duly signed, the supplementary evidence that was furnished to support and buttress a tottering cause, were all again paraded, until the jury, around to identify the prisoners, surprised the court by affirming that he could not swear to Edmond Connors; that to the best of his belief he was not there. Nowlan succeeded Daly, corroborated every word sworn to by that worthy, and wound up his evidence by the solemn declaration:

"But there's wan pris'ner there, that shouldn't be there; and that's as innocent as the babe unborn; and that is Edmond Connors. He had nay hand, nay act, or part in the Doneraile Conspiracy!"

There clearly then was but one course. Jury consults; and hands down a paper to the Judge. And Edmond Connors is dismissed from the dock—a free man. As he passed out with a courteous, but dignified:—"I thank ye, gintlemen!"

He felt a cold hand touch his own. He pressed it tightly, as much as to say:

"Yes, I understand. I owe my life to you, for having protected your little child."

Such is the strange magnetism that flashes from soul to soul in this world, when the mighty current is directed by kind thoughts, helpful deeds, and divinely human sympathies.

He whiled away the day in handshakings from friends, and weeping congratulations from those who were dear to him. For the friends of all the other prisoners were there; and where there was a common cause, there was a common triumph. He lingered around the city, though anxious to get home to his little paradise beneath the black hills. He felt himself bound in honor to wait and share the certain triumphant acquittal of the men whose shoulders touched his in the dock. But, as the evening shades closed in, and no news came out from the courthouse, he decided to get out the common cart, with its bed of straw and the quilt, in which the peasantry then, and now, used to travel from place to place, and he made all his preparations for his night journey homewards. Donal, his eldest son, was just turning his horse's head from the city, when he himself arrested them.

"We might as well wait and be home with thin," said the old man. "A few of the crowd came up. There was, alas! no triumph on their faces, but the pallor of great fear."

"What is it? how did it turn?" asked the old man.

"Wallis acquitted, Lynch, convicted and sentenced to be hanged," was the reply.

"God preserve us!" said the old man. "'Tis only the turn of a hand between life and the grave."

The crowd melted away; and the two men, father and son, passed out beneath the stars.

After a good many exclamations of fear, anger, pride, joy, they both sank into silence, as the horse jogged on. Whiffly enough, for his head was turned to home. A thousand wild thoughts chased one another through the old man's brain—the thought of his narrow escape from death, of the loyalty of that poor woman, of the strange instinct that had made him adopt her child—a deed of charity now required a hundredfold. Then he looked forward and began to calculate the chances against the child. If the least whisper of the truth were known—and why should it not transpire at any moment?—he could not retain the child, and this would be a breach of faith not only with the woman, but with all his own most cherished principles. He felt he needed an ally, and that ally should be his son, who had first discovered Nodlag, and who, when his father died, should succeed to the duty of her protector and father. But how could he break the terrible revelation? and

how would Donal take it? Would he have manliness enough to rise above the traditions of his class and do what would be most noble and generous? Or would the inborn instincts of the Celt revolt at the thought that the child of such blood should be harbored as one of their family? It was really a coat of the die, how Donal would take it; but it was absolutely necessary to make the revelation, and, with a silent prayer to Him Who sits above the stars, the old man coughed, and said:

"Are you awake, Donal?"

"Yerra, why wouldn't I be awake?" said Donal, rubbing his eyes; for he had been dozing. "Where are you?"

"I knew you were dozing," said his father; "and sure small blame to you. We're between the half-way house and Mallow."

"The night is so dark," said Donal, illogically. "I didn't know where we were. Did we pass the half-way house?"

"An hour ago," said his father. "Don't you see the wild castle of Ballinamona over there on the heights?"

"Sure enough," said Donal. "We'll be in Mallow in an hour. I wander what time is it?"

"Betune three and four in the morn', I think," said his father. "We'll have the light soon."

"Tis awfully cowld," said his son, whipping up the horse. "Why didn't you stop at the half-way house? Sure any wan would want a drink to-night."

The old man was silent. The occasion was not auspicious. Then he resolved it must be done.

"Donal?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I have somethin' to say to you that's on me mind. Did you notice anythin' in the Court to-day?"

"Nothin' but the usual blagardin' and ruffianism," said Donal. "I'm glad we're done with judges, juries, and informers forever."

This staggered the old man; but he knitted his brows and went on.

"Thin you didn't remark the evidence of Daly and Nowlan?"

"I did," said Donal, drily. "Maybe the grace of God is tetchin' the ruffians; or, begobs, maybe they got a bribe."

"That's it," said the old man, gleefully. "They did. Daly was bribed."

"I didn't think you used to do much in that way, sir," said Donal, half joking, half railing. "An' it must take a big bribe to get him ruffians to spake the truth."

"No, thin," said his father. "It was a little, weeshy bribe enough; and 'twas God sint it."

"I'm glad you're left to us, sir," said his son; "but, be all that's holy, I'd rather swing from the palm of these ruffians to creed and country."

The omens were growing more inauspicious; but the old man was determined.

"Donal," said he, "can you keep a secret?"

"Did you ever know me to blab anythin' you ever told me?" said his son.

"No!" was the reply. "An' that's the reason why I'm goin' to tell you somethin' that I wouldn't tell to any wan livin', except the priest and yourself."

"It must be a grate secret out an' out," said his son. "Perhaps you would want to swear me?"

"Yes, I do," said his father, "although the word of sich a son as you have been, Donal, is as good to me as if you kissed the Book! Pull up the horse for a minit!"

Donal drew the reins; and they came to a standstill on the hump of a little bridge that crossed a brawling river.

"Where are you?" said