

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

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"A WAYSIDE CROSS."

Zion Herald publishes the following beautiful poem from the pen of the late Louis Jones Macroe, a Methodist, who built the first electric tram road in Europe:

"A WAYSIDE CROSS."
The moving pictures of my night
Through planted fields and orchards white
With flowers, past tower and sleepy town,
All vanished save a cross that stood
Beside the way, close to the wood.
Below a hill whose slope of brown,
Warmed with the first glow of the vine;
And there a woman kneeling down
Before a shrine.

"On paved streets I hear the roar
Again, move in the crowd once more;
But low, those hillsides reappear—
Too hard, those hillsides reappear—
That peasant form; and even here,
Beside the way, close to the wood,
Out of the rain and wrong and loss,
On these and city streets, I see
A wayside cross."

LUKE DELMEGE.

BY THE REV. F. A. SHEEHAN, AUTHOR OF
"MY NEW CURATE," "GEOFFREY
AUSTIN," "STUDENT," "THE
TRIUMPH OF FAITH," "THE
CATHARIC MEA," ETC.

CHAPTER XXIII.—CONTINUED.

EUTHANASIA

"I'm very sorry. I know no place that appeals so strongly to one's sense of freedom. When you plunge into those tunnels of the Alps, you feel choked, as if the air were compressed into a solid mass by the weight of snow and granite. Here you are free, with a boundless horizon and unlimited loveliness."

"Yes," said Luke, carried on by the stream; "often heard that, to see the Alps to advantage, one must approach them from Italy."

"Quite so," said Hallock. "And you must return? I was hoping for the pleasure of your society and co-operation here. I am reading in the library at St. Gall's for a work I expect to issue soon from the press, and you could be of much assistance."

"I regret that my assistance heretofore has been to give your thoughts a wrong bias," said Luke, seizing the opportunity.

"Indeed! A wrong bias. Pray, how?"

"I regretted to hear that it was some sermons of mine drove you from the Church."

"But I have not been driven from the Church. That is quite a mistake. Nay, more, I cannot be driven."

"But pardon me for the harsh expression, the Church has repudiated you, and you cannot approach the sacraments."

"Cannot? Why, I do. I have been to Communion this morning, down at Schaffhausen."

"We regard such conduct as sacrilegious and dishonourable," said Luke, exasperated by Hallock's coolness.

"Oh! and who cares what you regard? Your opinion is of no consequence to me whatsoever."

"I have not sought this interview, Mr. Hallock," said Luke, "and with your permission I shall terminate it. But you have no right to utter a calumny; and, as a gentleman, you should promptly retract what you wrote to Miss Lefevrill concerning my misdirection."

"But if it is true? Your theology may allow it; but I, as an English gentleman, cannot tell a falsehood."

"But your statement that our priests were well-liberal, and, indeed, rather free in their opinions; and that I especially shared that liberalism, is, in correct and pardon me—a lie. We hold firmly and unreservedly the dogmatic teachings of the Church."

"Then you must take the alternative—that your knowledge of the English language, which, indeed, like everything English, does not lend itself to the restrictions of dogma, is extremely limited. You don't seem to understand the vast responsibilities of words in solemn places."

"It may be so," said Luke, humbly. They were silent for a few minutes. The three little Swiss girls were still singing beneath them on a rustic seat, under a clump of firs. At last Hallock spoke:

"Let us not part in anger, Mr. Delmège. I am sorry I have hurt you. But—the faithful Israelites would not look well, during their captivity, not to look too curiously on the gods of Babylon."

Hallock raised his hat as he passed down the steep steps to the road.

Had this taken place in London it would have given Luke a fit of depression for several days. Here, in the bright sunshine and crystal atmosphere, he flung the moment's chagrin instantly aside. So, too, in the afternoon, the discovery that a pleasant, instead of being equivalent to a franc, was equivalent to the hundredth part of a franc, sent the blood mounting to Luke's forehead, but only for a moment.

"That porter should have assassinated me," he said, and thought no more of it. Only there was a craving in his heart, growing every minute, for the peace and serenity, the security and happiness, of home.

"The crust of bread and the crust of water are better than the despotisms of the Egyptians," he thought.

He left the vast dining-hall early that evening. The splendours of society were beginning to pall on him. He craved rest for thought from the glitter and sparkle of fashion; and long before the last dishes were brought around, he had ensconced himself in the gas-lit veranda at the farthest window. Here, with a small round table by his side, and some coffee and rusks, he hid behind a heavy curtain, and awaited the illumination of the fall.

At 9:30 the entire body of visitors had assembled in the veranda, and the lights were lowered until the place had become quite dark. Darkness, too, hung over the valley, and no one could dream that man was at twilight, where the eye was drawn by hearing, as the fall frothed in the shallows, or was torn into streamlets by the granite rocks beneath. Then, as at light's first dawning, a faint pink, roseate in its heart, and fading into purple, streamed across the valley, and the falls blushed under the revelation, and seemed to answer louder to the call of light. And so the pink dawn hovered

o'er the valley, until it paused, hesitated, faded, and there was darkness again, but for the voice that pierced it—the voice of many waters in the night.

Luke turned around, and saw standing, quite close to his chair—for every seat was occupied, a feeble old man and his daughter. He leaned heavily on her arm, and his white hair made a light in the darkened room. Instantly Luke arose and proffered his chair. The young lady thanked him, as the old man sank wearily into the armchair. She took her place near him, and Luke went back into the shadows and set on a rough bench that ran around the wall. The falls were lighted again with green and then with blue lights, and the waiters came and raised the gas jets. Man's little play with mighty nature was over.

As Luke rose to pass from the veranda, a voice said to him:

"I didn't know in the darkness that it was Father Delmège we had to thank for his courtesy."

It was Barbara Wilson. Luke flushed with pleasure. After all his neglect, it was comforting to know that he had unconsciously done a small favor. And then through her lips his country and home spoke to him.

"Miss Wilson!" he said. "It is an unexpected pleasure to meet you. I didn't know you were travelling with your father."

"It is not father," she said, her lips tremulously recognizing him.

She led him over to where Louis was still sitting. His face was turned outward towards the night, and it was the face of death. His eyes saw but darkness, and his trembling hands clutched at the air, as the hands of a half-perished outcast spread for warmth before a fire.

And his hair streamed down on his forehead, and it was white down the dreary gas-light, not with the venerable silver of honored age, but with the ghastly lustre of blanched and bloodless youth. He turned at his sister's voice and tried to rise, but fell back helplessly.

"Yes, of course, Father Delmège," he said, not looking upwards, but out into the night, his weak memory trying to grip the slippery and evanescent shadows of the past. "Yes, of course, Father—I beg pardon—how do you do, sir? I hope you are well."

"Don't you remember, Louis' dearest, don't you remember Lisane and uncle, and all our pleasant days? This is Father Delmège, who is always so kind."

"To be sure, to be sure. How do you do, sir? I hope I see you very well," said the poor invalid.

"Now, Louis dear, do rouse yourself. To-morrow we shall go on to Lucerne, and you must pick up strength for the journey. Were not the illuminations beautiful? It was Father Delmège who kindly gave us his place."

"To be sure, to be sure. How much do I owe you, sir? I always pay promptly. But, Barbara, why did you let them throw that horrid light on the stage? No artist would have done it. If Elfrida was to throw herself from that bridge it would be in the darkness. I saw her; 'twas well done, I tell you. Madame Lefrida is again Elfrida! Elfrida!"

She shrieked aloud, so that the waiters paused as they arranged the breakfast tables, and one or two timid visitors hurriedly fled the veranda.

"This won't do," said Luke, kindly; "we must get him away."

"Come, dearest," said Barbara, her hand around Louis' neck. "Come, 'tis bedtime."

He rose wearily, seemingly anxious to follow his daughter through the night and down the river.

"It was a clever impersonation," he continued. "That leap from the bridge was perfect. But to throw that vile calcium on such an artist at such a moment was an outrage, sir, an outrage!"

"This is Father Delmège, Louis dear," said Barbara, as Luke helped the poor invalid forward. "You remember, don't you?"

"Of course, of course. How do you do, sir? I hope I see you well."

Luke helped along the corridor, and then stood still, at the foot of the staircase, watching the two figures, the white-haired imbecile, and the tall, lithe form of the fair sister, tolling wearily step by step up to the second corridor. Then he went out into the piazza. The full moon was now rising, and just casting her beam down the valley and across the chasm to the old castle that held watch and ward over the turbulent youth of the river. How paltry and mean are the feeble attempts of men, contrasted with the enterprises of the Almighty! The wretched illumination of an hour ago—what a sacrilege on the majesty of nature, now that nature itself was triumphant! Luke gazed down the valley; but he saw—the two weary figures tolling up the long stairs—strong, tender womanhood supporting a broken and disjointed manhood. He saw a sister's love covering a brother's shame. He saw the old Greek sacrifice again—the sister imperilling her life and honor to pay due, solemn rites to the dead. How paltry his learned and aesthetic friends seem now! How contemptible their dreary platitudes! How empty and hollow their humanity and the race! "Seek the God in man!" Was there ever such blasphemy? And himself—what had been his life for seven years? Compared with the noble self-surrender of this young girl, how hollow and empty and pitiful had been his fine sermons, his dignified platitudes, his straining after effect, his misdirection. "Conscience for the first time whispered 'Idiot,' but too faintly to be heeded."

A hand was laid on his arm, and Hallock, removing a cigar from his mouth, said:

"I would recommend you, Mr. Del-

mege, to get that young friend of yours home as soon as possible. It will be hardly pleasant for her to travel with a cold."

He went to his room—a very beautiful room, with its parqueted floor, polished and spotless—but he could not sleep. He did not desire it. He coveted a few hours of the luxury of thought. He had so much to think about, and so many thoughts and memories fraught with the pain of pleasure, and so many with the delight of pain.

He opened his window, through which the full moon was streaming, and stood on the balcony that overhung the garden. The night view was limited, for the garden sloped upwards to a little wood, where, faced against the moonlight, the iron-work of a summer-house was traced. He leaned over the balustrade and gave himself up to thought.

It was a turning point in his life. Just then the midnight hour floated up the valley, and Luke thought he heard voices in the garden beneath.

"Here come Lorenzo and Jessica," he said. "How sweet the moonlight, etc. I must go."

Ah, no! Not moonlight lovers, with all the glamour of affection and the poetry of life streaming around them, but the wrecked life and the guardian angel again. Slowly they came from the shadows into the moonlight, and Luke was not ashamed to observe them.

The poor gray head lay heavily against the sister's shoulder, or rather on her breast, as she raised her arm around his neck and supported his falling steps. Clearly there was no sleep for that fretted and irritated brain, or such sleep only as makes the awakening heaven. Slowly they passed under the balcony, and here Luke heard the prayers that Barbara whispered, because her brother's eyes were closed, and he could not see the sister's face, or rather on her breast, as she raised her arm around his neck and supported his falling steps.

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stained, and yellow; and surely enough—"Denham Court, 25 S. Lombon, S. W." was marked there.

"What next?" thought Luke. But he said:

"You may not know, Father Meade, the character of this place and its neighborhood. This is a place where a person must be careful—"

"I neither know nor care," said the old priest; "all I know is that Allua is here, that she is in trouble, and has called for me; and here I am. Stay here my good man," he said to the driver "If you stir from that spot, I'll take the law of you."

"All right, sir," said the driver; "but you'll have to pay for it."

"Come, Luke," said Father Meade, cavalierly, as he walked coolly into the wretched hall and up the broken stairs. "Ah, if I had that bathroom in Ireland!"

On the first landing he knocked at four doors in succession. There was some shuffling and pulling of chairs, but no answer. Up the creaking stairs again, and again he knocked, and no reply.

"They're all asleep, or dead," he said.

Higher still and higher, till they came to an attic. Here was the sound of voices. They entered a wretched room. A feeble light was burning in a tin sconce. And by the faint illumination they saw a wretched pallet on which lay an invalid in the last stages of consumption. She was gray and old, but her eyes were young as they challenged the priest.

"You got my letter," she said faintly in an English accent.

Father Meade hesitated. No one but the Father who is in heaven could recognize in that poor wreck, the child—the convent child of so many years ago. And the accent entirely bothered Father Meade.

"Are you Allua?" he said doubtfully.

"I changed too, Father; but the Blessed Mother sent you. Take me from this!"

Father Meade hesitated. He always boasted that he was "a man of the world"; and whenever, at a visitation dinner, he had to propose his Bishop's health, he always wound up the litany of praises by declaring that his Lordship was, above all things else "a man of the world." So he was not going to be taken in by a girl with an English accent.

"I came for you," he said, "but I want to make sure. Say the lines again."

The poor patient smiled at the absurdity. But she gathered her strength and repeated:

There is a green island in lone Gougane Barra
Where the waves of song rush forth like an arrow.

"Good," said Father Meade. "And you said 'I' cocked his ear."

"I said 'Alleluia of song,' because the priests were saying Alleluia all that week."

"Good," said Father Meade. "And I said—"

"You said—'My little children, wherever you are, North, South, East, West, remember I am always your father and your friend; and whenever you are in trouble call on me and I'll come to you.'"

"Never say another word," cried Father Meade. "Come here, you whippersnapper, dress her at once, and she shall go home with me."

"Where are you going to take that poor girl?" said the practical Luke.

"Oh! I never thought of that," said Father Meade. "I'll take her to some hotel, and off to Limerick in the morning. Of course, she thinks I don't know anything; but I know all."

He winked at Luke.

In a few minutes the girls came downstairs, bearing the invalid between them. The hope and its realization had broadened her up, and she looked almost vigorous as she stepped from the dreadful place.

"You ain't agoin' to take that there gal in the cab?" said the driver.

"Aren't I? Mind your own business, man, or I'll make you."

"Then you'll pay for it, I tell you," said the man in his bewilderment.

Gently and reverently they got the poor girl into the cab, Luke standing by motionless. He was wondering what Amiel Lefevrill would say to such divine altruism as this. The two girls stood at the door. They had said good-bye to their companion. Sorrow, hopelessness, despair were on their faces. And just as the driver flicked his horse, and they were moving off, they flung out their hands in a sudden gesture and sobbed:

"Father, Father, don't leave us!"

"Oh! Oh! What's that? What's that? Stop, you ruffian, or I'll knock you down. Come here, me poor girls. What do ye want?"

"We want to go with you, Father, anywhere, anywhere. Oh! for God's sake, Father, don't leave us!"

What could he do? It was most imprudent; but he had too much faith in God to hesitate.

"Come!" he said, whilst the cabman growled furiously, and Luke gazed at him with stupid amazement. "Come, and let God do the rest!"

Luke called to see the Wilsons next morning. He found Louis actually revived. There had been a reaction after the journey. Luke told them, with laughter and horror, of the Quixotic drollery of Father Meade.

"He's taking them to Limerick," he said, "to the Magdalen asylum there. I have a sister in that convent, you know, Miss Wilson. Some day I hope to have the pleasure of making you acquainted with her. We shall call some day when we shall have leisure."

He was surprised to see her start and put her hand over her heart with a gesture of pain. The very suggestion of fallen womanhood was such a shock and surprise to such a pure soul.

Magdalen! Magdalen! the dearest of all the saints outside the charmed circle of the Incarnation—how does it happen that there is a sting of pain in all the honeyed sweetness of that dear name?

"She must have been told of Margery's unkind remarks," thought Luke.