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THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY

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CHAPTER XLIII

THE AMABELE VALLEY

The tumult of emotions that swept the soul of Dion Wycherly, the *Ba-as*, the successful miner and rancher, on discovering his brother under such novel and unexpected circumstances, is indescribable. Delight at meeting him again, for the brothers loved each other; pain at seeing him so emaciated and wasted, and with such little hope of recovery; wonder and admiration at the bravery of the young girl who had sacrificed herself so nobly; and just an incipient pang of pleasure that she was not Jack's wife, were the chief thoughts and feelings that swayed his mind during these days, which he spent there, plotting and speculating for their and his own future.

The recognition between the brothers was most affecting. When Annie O'Farrell had told Dion all that was to be told about his brother, even down to his dreaming, which was not dreaming, at all, but perfect consciousness of Dion's presence, they decided it were best that Jack should be told that his dream was a reality, and that his brother had come to seek and find him. When Annie had prepared the way, she retired from the little hut where Jack's hammock swung easily, and Dion entered.

The poor, pale invalid looked up for a moment at the tall, atheltic form that towered above him. Then, stretching forth his bony hand, he said, while his eyes filled with tears:

"I knew it was you. I knew it could be none other than you."

For some moments the two brothers continued to gaze at one another, holding their hands clasped. Then, realizing the tremendous contrast between them—his own riotous and exultant health, and the sad wreck of the young life that lay beneath him—Dion suddenly dropped his brother's hand and went over to examine some little photos or pictures that were pinned to the wall. Then, brushing aside a tear, he came back and seated himself near the hammock where his dying brother lay. After a few observations, he said:

"Miss O'Farrell has told me a good deal, Jack; but not all. You were in the same hospital?"

"Yes!" said his brother. "We were in the same hospital. But we seldom spoke, beyond the mere morning or evening salute. But she was watching over me like a sister, and I didn't know it. I say, Dion, do you know anything about women?"

"Not much," said Dion. "I've seen few here but a few native gins, and they seem to be only one degree below, and yet in another sense far above the animal creation."

"Yes! That's what I've been thinking. But I have seen a good many and the strange thing is, they don't know the awful power they have for right or wrong."

He ceased a moment; and Dion did not stop the moralizing, although he wanted to get at facts.

"But what I'm coming to is this," said Jack, as if communing with himself. "You meet a hundred of them and they're all alike, cut according to the same pattern, turned out and groomed *a la mode*. Then, one day, you meet another, and you say at once, 'That's not a woman. That's something more. God thought a good deal before he made *her*.'"

He paused for a moment. And then, as if recalling something, he said:

"You mustn't call her Miss O'Farrell any more, Dion. You must call her Annie. She's our sister."

"She might be offended," said Dion dubiously. "It isn't usual, you know."

"Never fear!" said Jack confidently. "But call her Annie—nothing else—mind! Well, I was saying, she was watching me, and I didn't know it. Lord bless you, Di we know nothing. But one day she cut me dead in one of corridors of the hospital; and, after a few days' agony, I asked explanations. Afraid? I was more afraid of her than Almighty God, or even old Stanihurst himself. Well, I got the explanations. Then one night I got a hemorrhage on the streets and was carried to the hospital. Some day before I die, I'll tell you what occasioned the hemorrhage, but not now—"

"Jack, you are not going to die," said his brother passionately. "You mustn't die. God won't take you away now when I have found you and can give you all you want in this world. You and Annie will come away with me from this infernal hole, and I'll put you in that climate and place where, if you never had a lung, you'd grow one. Cheer up, old man! There are many happy days before us yet!"

But Jack shook his head.

"It was a forlorn hope, Di," he said; "a forlorn hope—my coming out here. I know too much. But it was some gain with my torn lungs to get here, if only to breathe a little. But I cannot last long, and I'm not sorry for it."

To which Dion could answer nothing.

"I've told Annie where I'm to be buried—high up there on the summit, where the sun will strike first in the morning and rest his last beams at night—"

"No, no, no, no," said Dion; "you and Annie must come away with me. It is not far—only a couple of hundred miles, and we'll do it by easy stages. If you don't like the train, I can manage to get you taken along by the coolies, so that there'll be no jolting, and we can rest where we please. I'll talk to Miss O'Farrell about it, if you let me. You won't die just yet, Jack, old man! And, if you were to die in a few years or so, I want to put you where I can see your grave and remember you."

"That's not of much consequence, Di," said the sick boy. "You are not going to remain here and give up Rohira and all the old associations."

"But Ned—you're forgetting, Jack. Ned has Rohira. It is his by every right."

"Ned won't trouble Rohira," said Jack. "Some day, when I'm better, I'll tell you all. But when I'm gone—well, let us say to heaven—you and Annie will go back to Ireland and make everything square for poor Pap, before he dies."

And somehow Dion did not seem to think the project undesirable.

After some hesitation and doubts as to whether the invalid could bear a long journey inland, they at last decided to go. And as Jack was impatient and irritable, he thought it better to go by rail, instead of being jolted through the bush on the backs of black coolies. It meant two days' weary travelling in slow trains under burning suns and with the fine dust of the tropics filling every nook and crevice of the carriage. But, thanks to the assiduity and skill of his companion, the poor, broken life still held on until it was established in the handsome bungalow on a slope of the Amabele Valley, where Dion had fixed what he thought was his permanent home.

Everything that wealth, utilized by brotherly love, could do to contribute to the comfort of the patient and his nurse, was now done, for Dion seemed to rule here as a little prince, who commanded the allegiance and services of white men and black in the region all around.

And surely, if there were a place on earth calculated to win back to health and vigour a life that was fast passing away, it would be the very spot where Dion had built, in a style of unusual magnificence for those parts, a pavilion, or bungalow, and surrounded it with every aspect and accident of luxury attainable at such a distance from civilization. The house was very extensive, though there was but one story; but it was so ingeniously arranged that suites of apartments seemed to open in every direction; and in every direction there were visible from the high French windows, that opened on a veranda, glimpses of mountains, far-away and snow-covered, Stormberg or Roggeveld Ranges, taking on themselves hues that varied in the atmospheric changes, but were always clearly limned and defined in the pellucid and crystalline air. Through the vast vistas of valleys, too, that opened up the avenues of these mountains were to be seen plumage of palms and foliage of forests, where clustered in the shape and size of trees plants that are dwarfed in our colder climate. And in the immediate vicinity of the house, vast clumps of pelargoniums and hydrangeas flung out their burning blossoms to the sun and wind, whilst deep down in moist shelters, where the air was always laden with hot vaporous mists, there grew in rich but unhealthy profusion, great bulbous plants of the *amaryllideae* or *irideae* types, luscious and beautiful, but reminding one too much of miasmata and the deadly fecundity of marshlands and the African Campagna. Besides the natural flora of these rich tropical climes, Dion had gathered into a conservatory still rarer specimens of plants and flowers indigenous to India and the Southern Isles; and through forests of imported palms, the many-coloured birds, the secretary, the weaver, the bird of paradise, leaped and swung and hung; and underneath, the little jerboa and cunning monkeys flashed and chattered, and mocked the lazy lizards and tortosies, that preferred to lie flat and still in the burning sun. Down along the valley a stream flowed perennially; and Dion had brought its waters into his gardens, where in pond and fountain and basin they cooled the atmosphere to sight and touch and hearing. Here Dion ensconced his dying brother; and no modern dread of contagion diminished in the least measure the boundless exercise of fraternal kindness which was shed around the dying boy. And here, too, by daily intercourse and the common love they bore the boy, and by the deeper interpretation of one another's character, there grew up between the great rancher and miner and the girl, who had sacrificed so much at the call of charity, that deep, reverential awe of each other, as of something divine, that sooner or later deepens into a holier feeling, which does not expel the divine element, but transforms it into something more human. And Jack saw it and rejoiced; and in his next letter home, which Annie wrote for him, he put in a postscript before he sealed the envelope:

"I think it is all right, dear old Pap. When I'm gone, order Dion home at once; and tell him he must not travel alone."

And strange to say, from the moment the idea was suggested, and Dion's thoughts did turn homeward. For just as the savage, however used to civilization, will, on returning to his tribe, cast off the garments of civilized peoples and refuse to speak their language, and clothe himself again in the blankets of savagery, because all the time he had been dreaming of the forest and the wigwam and the hunt, so the civilized man cast aside the attractions of the desert and the jungle, of the forest and the veldt, because the mists and vapours of the North come to him in his dreams, and will not let him rest in a soil that never gave him his birthright. And yet, Dion knew it would mean a wrench for him to dissociate himself so suddenly from all that he had prized these last few years; and prized all the more because he had won his wealth and honour by upwright and worthy means.

One of those lovely days, which are spring with us, but which put on all the splendorous of summer in tropical climes, Dion told his brother how he had come to be a wealthy rancher, and to be venerated as a king by the tribes.

"I couldn't get on with that brute of a captain," he said, with savage reminiscences of seaman's brutality. "The other fellows were all right, but he was a brute. I had all I could do to keep my hands from him. But, when we got to the Cape, I could stand it no longer. I decamped. And to prevent arrest, I pushed into the country as far as I could. I don't think the fellow would arrest me if he could. But I ran no chances. I worked my way up through the interior; and, Jack, old fellow, 'tis hard work enough, I tell you. Then I got on to East London, and pushed into the interior again. I was often out of a job, because I had to tell the duffers I was a seaman, not a land-lubber; and they couldn't see what a knowledge of navigation could do for me up on the sands and veldts of Cape Colony. But I pushed on, sometimes hungry, sometimes in rags, but growing hardy and vigorous and athletic—"

He stopped suddenly, as the terrible contrast with the withered and shrunken form beneath him in the hammock arrested his attention and created some compunction for his harmless boasting. But Jack, unheeding, said;

"Go on, Di! It is getting interesting!"

"Well at last I struck oil, though at first it was but a tiny well. I got appointed as manager in a store far up the country, away from cities and towns. The fellows that ran it were a lot of d——d sharpers; and, as they had only the poor natives to deal with, they shaved them right and left. They had a lot of old Brummagem stuffs sent out, not worth the carriage paid on them; but they sold, along with trinkets, penknives, mechanical dolls, Jews'-harps, to the poor natives, for what, do you think?"

Jack couldn't guess. He didn't know where the natives could get money. He at last struck on diamonds.

"Yes, you Solomon, you're right," said Dion. "But though they had the diamonds, they dared not show them. You know it is dead against such law as we have out here; and they would shoot a native as they'd shoot a dog. But the poor fellows had almost the equivalent of diamonds in ostrich feathers and plumes, plucked sometimes from the living animal. These are of great value, as the Cape merchants know. And sometimes the natives brought in pieces of ivory, red as yonder sunset, for which the honest traders would fight like catamounts."

"Well, somehow," Dion continued after a pause, "I had pity on the poor devils, seeing them so outrageously swindled; and by degrees I got them to understand that these feathers were worth ten times, twenty times, a hundred times the value the traders set on them. They were slow to understand; but, when they understood, they held on like grim death. And the poor devils were touchingly grateful. They wanted me to decamp and become their king; they promised me fifty wives and a tent full of ostrich plumes. They promised me everything. I say, Jack!"

"Well?" said Jack, who was deeply interested.

"You may say what you like about civilization and all that. But, by Jove, if ever there is to be a valley of Jehoshaphat, I'll take my chance with the black nigger and not with the white robber and plunderer."

"Well," he continued, "you know all this couldn't go on. The bosses were getting suspicious, although they still had cent. per cent. for their money. And I was beginning to think of looking out for another place, or making tracks for home, when one day I was caught in a thunderstorm, and I had to run for a Bushman's kraal. I was only in when down came deluge number two, to which old Noah's deluge was but a sprinkling from a waterpot. I heard a whisper amongst the gins, with whom I was a prime favorite, because I gave them little bits of glass jewelry and little bells and such like childish things; and I heard them say: 'Tis the *Ba as!*'"

"They were shy and frightened, poor devils, but I could see how glad they were to see me. And, after a time, they renewed their offer; and then, to tempt me further, they volunteered to show me some of their ostrich farms and where they found their ivories. I went; and the more I saw, the more I wondered. Of course, everything was primitive and savage; but, by Jove, if the white man could put his hungry eyes on what I saw, he would exterminate every black man in Africa. I went home next day, for the distance was great, to find a curt dismissal before me for being absent from duty. I wasn't sorry. I went back to the tribes."

Dion stopped, as if thinking. Then, he resumed:

"Jack, I'm no saint, God knows; but, on my mother's soul, I acted with the strictest honor with these poor devils. I suppose, like all men, I have that devil's hunger of money in my heart; but, if I were going to judgment now, I do not hold a fraction dishonestly or unlawfully obtained. I showed these poor fellows the strict money value of their goods; I made them reorganize on a newer system their ostrich-farms; I made them store up in secret places their treasures of ivory; and—I showed them, but they were mighty slow to believe it, that the bits of glass from Birmingham were useless, and that their own bits of polished stone were of great value. They wouldn't believe me; and they wanted me to take some of these stones, which would have made me a half-millionaire. I refused them."

"Dion," said Jack enthusiastically, "you were always a brick."

"Did I lose?" continued Dion. "Not a bit! I went to the Cape, negotiated with other feather merchants, feeling my way cautiously. I put these poor devils on to a good market; and they repaid me nobly. And then—the white devil got into their hearts; and now, they are becoming mere white men, cunning, avaricious, treacherous, under the yellow curse. But they are loyal to me! In a radius of two hundred miles from here I am master. I command their loyalty and their services. They would cheat and murder any other white man, if they were provoked by revenge or avarice. They would die for me. But I am not a rich man, thank God! I have this farm and these pretty things, which are valuable; and one thing more, which I shall show you!"

He went away; and, in the meantime, Annie came in to do some little service.

"I'm awfully sorry you weren't here, Annie," said Jack, "to hear the history of Dion's adventures. I must get him to tell you all again."

"He appears to be a little king around here," said Annie. "The moment the natives understood you were his brother, they wanted to besiege us with kindness."

"Weren't we lucky, Annie?" he cried, his eyes glowing with pleasure, although the bones around the sockets were painfully visible. "Dion will be here in a moment; and he'll be delighted."

Dion was delighted. He came back with a little paper box in his hand, which he opened. Annie moved away.

"Come here, Annie," he said. "We have no secrets from you."

He held up the box, and took out a large diamond. It was a bluish-white stone, the two colors blending and alternating as if the light of them was a liquid. Jack took it to examine.

"I would be afraid to tell you what this will be worth, when cut by a lapidary. I must say it was forced on my acceptance by one of the chiefs for some service which I thought trifling, but which he thought important. I objected, and explained fully the value of the stone. It was pathetic to see the old chief shaking his head, as he said in his own dialect:

"'It is no use to me. I shall soon be with my fathers. It is no use to my tribe. The white man has come to stay. All will be his. Take it, while it is in my power to give. Some day, you will marry a white wife; and let it be her wedding portion.'"

Jack was turning it over in his thin frail hands, and holding it against the light. At Dion's last words he became very thoughtful, and poised the stone in his fingers.

"Dion!" he said, at length.

"Well, Jack?" said his brother.

"Dion!" said the dying boy, "what is nobly obtained, may be nobly bestowed."

"Certainly!" said Dion, astonished at his brother's solemnity.

"Then I shall make it our sister Annie's wedding portion," said the boy. "If Annie will accept it as such," said Dion, looking at her questioningly.

And the tears welled into her eyes; but she did not say Nay!

CHAPTER XLIV

A FAREWELL SERMON

When the old pastor turned back to his dining-room, after expelling forcibly the unfortunate man, who had intruded on his privacy to insult him, it may be said that the door closed on the most unhappy being on the planet. Full of disgust, self-shame, mortification, he threw himself into his arm-chair, and yielded himself tamely to the torrent of troubles that had rushed on him. The most acute of all his reflections was that he had been betrayed into an act of violence that degraded himself. He thought with all the poignancy of sorrow and shame of his niece's defection, of the estrangement of his parishioners, of his blindness and future desolation. But he cried out in the bitterness of his soul:

"I could have borne all, all; and conquered all. But to have locked my hand, my consecrated hand in the neck-cloth of a drunken peasant—oh!"

The following day, when Henry Liston came down, and told about the frightful murder of the preceding night, he was surprised at his pastor's indifference—still more surprised when the latter bade him take up his pen, and dictated to him the words in which he sent his resignation of the parish to his Bishop.

The following Sunday, he referred very briefly to the murder that had taken place. He spoke of it, as it reflected odium on the parish, and as the result of unbridled passion, or that thirst for revenge, which had come down to the people as an unhappy heirloom from their pagan ancestors. But he did not breathe a word about the unhappy man whose life was now in proximate danger on account of the crime. But when he had finished his allusions he did not turn in to resume the reading of the Mass; he remained for some time in the same posture, his fingers clasped in front of his vestments, and the dark glasses, looking quite black in the gloom staring down at the congregation.

After some minutes, as if he were trying to conquer his emotion, he said;

"And now I am about to introduce to your notice another topic, more painful to me than that to which I have alluded, and probably quite as painful to you. Since I became pastor of this parish twenty-five ago, I have never allowed any infringement, or breach of the moral law to pass without due chastisement from this altar. I believed then, and I believe now, that there is no better way of checking vice than bringing public opinion to bear upon it: and thank God, so far at least, public opinion is on the side of God and Christian morality. What the near future may bring, God only knows. People tell me that things are changing, changing rapidly, changing terribly—that the old, deep, religious sense of the people is dying away; and that the law of God will not be reverenced in the future as in the past. However that may be," he said, raising his voice, and speaking with the old sternness and determination, "I shall never cease to uphold the high standard of morality in my parish that was handed down from my predecessors; and to-day which marks my last appearance on this altar, I hereby denounce and stigmatize in the strongest manner the conduct of one who was closely connected with me by ties of flesh and blood, and whose departure from this parish took place under circumstances that have been the occasion of great scandal to the whole community. There may have been no sin in her action—nay, I'm sure there has been no sin. But we have to guard not only against sin, but against scandal and those who are placed by education and otherwise above the crowd are bound particular to avoid everything that could be rock of offence to their humbler and weaker brethren. I know, of course, the defence that has been made. I know it is said that my niece is a professional nurse, and bound to attend patients, high and low, rich and poor. I know also that her motives are the purest and holiest in sacrificing herself to accompany a dying boy to far-away Africa. But, whatever be thought of these arguments in medical circles, and whatever be the new-fangled principles that have come into being these last few years with what is called the progress of science and education, I have to consider the interests of my flock, which, at least as yet, has not abandoned the old Christian ideas of maiden modesty and prudence. Hence, I gave my niece the alternative of staying at home with me, or leaving me forever. I told her that the moment she left my parish under such circumstances she ceased to be my niece. She took her choice. And," he said fiercely, "I have cut her image out of my heart forever. She shall never darken my door again. She shall never sit at my table. She shall never hear my voice. God knows, it is true I did look forward to the time when she might be a help and a comfort to me in my old age and blindness. The strongest of us will cling to some support in our darkness and descent towards the grave; and I was hoping that in my darkness and sorrow, I would have some one near me to help me to spend the lonely and sorrowful hours of a blind old age. That is not to be. So God has permitted; so she has decided. But, as I have said, I cast her away from me forever. With the strangers she has cast her lot; and her lot shall be with the stranger forever. But when I am gone, let no man say, I spared my own flesh and blood, when the law of God and the welfare of the people required it."

Here again he paused; and there was the deepest silence in the church, except for the sobbing of the women, who swayed themselves to and fro, under the tragic solemnity of the scene, and who broke into a loud wailing, when the priest's voice faltered as he said: "The strongest of us will cling to some support in our darkness and descent toward the grave." The men looked down, fingering their hats, but their faces were set and pale with emotion.

"And now," said the parish priest, in a softer voice, "I have to announce to you that I am no longer your pastor. I have sent in my resignation to your Bishop, and he has accepted it. I had hoped," he continued, not noticing the increased emotion of the people, "to remain your pastor to the end, because there is a certain human pride or vanity in dying with the honours of one's profession and in harness. But, an accident, locked up in my breast, that occurred this last week has precipitated matters, and next Sunday, the new parish priest of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy will address you from this altar. Hence, my words to-day are my last words to you. For twenty-five years I have tried to serve God and you, imperfectly and feebly, I know, but yet, I think, with honesty and sincerity. I can say with St. Paul, that 'I did not covet your gold or silver.' Probably, you thought I was often exacting about dues; but it wasn't for myself, but because I believed it was a duty I had to discharge. To-day, if my debts were paid, I would not be worth one shilling. In other things, too, you thought me hard; but it was the hardness of the father that seeks the welfare of his child, and puts his eternal salvation before everything else. Hence, I know that I was neither loved nor liked in this parish—"

"You were, you were, yer reverence," cried a woman passionately sobbing, "but you didn't know the people. You kep' away from 'em; but they loved you in their heart of hearts."

"An' 'tis God Almighty's truth that the woman is alther spakin'," said a farmer, standing up, although his voice shook with the unusual experience of having spoken in a church.

A deep murmur of approbation and sympathy ran through the congregation at these words. It was an inarticulate, but eloquent declaration of love and loyalty that a king might envy. It touched the strong man at the altar so keenly that his whole frame shook with emotion, and his trembling hand went fumbling beneath the chasuble for his handkerchief. And when he took out the old red handkerchief, and lifting up the black glasses, wiped those eyes where the light of Heaven would never shine again, a low, long wail of anguish rose up from the dense mass of people, and many a heart-felt and burning word in Irish reached the ears of the weeping priest.

It was fully five minutes before he could master his emotion, or subdue theirs. Then he said, hastily hiding his hands beneath his chasuble:

"There! There! I did not expect this. But what's done can't be undone now. But you have unmanned me; and I must now refrain from saying all that I wanted to say. But it was briefly this I felt all along that I belonged to a past generation; and that all my thoughts and dreams were out of place now. I thought I belonged to the time when the people were tender and true, were kindly and honourable towards each other, and had a deep love in their hearts for God and Ireland. All my own love and hope and ambition were centred in these two words. To do God's work, however imperfectly, to serve Ireland, however unworthily, here was my ambition, here was my reward! Then I thought, perhaps unwisely, that the new generation which had arisen did not understand these things—that there was more selfishness, more cunning, more treachery in these days than in the day that are gone. But, somehow, little glimpses into the lives of the people, from time to time, made me suspect that perhaps I misunderstood them; and to-day, as I am leaving you, I most humbly ask your pardon, and that of Almighty God, if I have formed a wrong judgment about you. But all that is gone. And in saying Farewell! to you, believe me that I carry with me consolation that I never expected to possess, and that will be a staff and support to my tottering feet in the way I have yet to tread. And all that I will ask of you in return is to forget, as far as you can, my own failings whilst I was here, and to be merciful to my memory when I'm dead!"

The acute agony of the people had died away; but there was a deep murmur of prayer and praise, when the priest turned around, and felt his way to the end of the altar.

When he came forth from the sacristy after his Thanksgiving, the whole congregation were on their knees before him, and the acolyte, who held his hand and led him, had to pick his way through a narrow avenue to the gate. The old priest knew by the instinct of the blind that he was passing through a crowd; and he made the Sign of the Cross over them as he went. But he hardly recognized the dimensions of the multitude, until he reached the gate, and heard the noise of the people standing up and the tumult of exclamation that followed him as he passed down the road to where his horse was standing. Just as he was mounting his car, he felt that his coat-tails plucked gently; and, stooping down, he caught the tiny hand of a little child.

"Father," said she, in her childish way, "won't you come back any more?"

"Who is this?" he said. "Whom have I got here?"

"I'm Eileen Hogan — 'Chatterbox,' you know!"

It was one of his school favorites, whom he had christened with that name.

He gently stroked the fair hair of the child, and passed his hand over her soft cheek.

"No! Eily," he said. "But maybe you'll come to see me. Good-bye! and be a good girl!"

He mounted his car and drove away.

Mrs. Duggan was not in the habit of going to first Mass to Doonvarragh. She found it easier to attend 10 o'clock Mass at Athboy, which was equidistant from her house. She was not present, therefore, at the scene just described, which took place in Doonvarragh chapel; but she heard of it, and in the newly-found enthusiasm of the people, it lost nothing in the recital. And amidst her own profound sorrow and shame, she could not help feeling a little pride in her own loyalty to her pastor, and the way in which her opinions had now been vindicated.

"Many and many a time I tould ye, ye were wrong—out an' out: but ye wouldn't listen to me. Wid yere ejucation, an' yere dress, an' yere style, ye think ye know more than Almighty God Himself, Glory be to His Holy Name! But, whin the throuble comes thin ye opens yere eyes, or rather they're opened for ye! Oh, maurone! if that poor bhoy had only been said and led by his priests, he'd have a different shtory to tell to-day. But, sure, no wan, from the beginnin' of the wurrald till now ever knew luck nor grace attindin' anywan, that wint again their priests."

There was no reply. There never was a reply to any outbursts of honest eloquence on the part of the Irish vanithees. They did not reason, nor argue, nor debate. They decreed. And there was no appeal.

Suddenly, a new idea flashed across the mind of the brave old woman. They had told her that her parish priest was going away. Perhaps, she would never see him again, never have the chance of telling how faithful and loyal she was amidst all changes and vicissituces. She instantly gave orders to have the horse and cart brought out again, demanded a new cap, freshly quilted and frilled, and put on the great cloth cloak with the satin hood, which was the ornament and glory of Irish womanhood, and which not only lasted a lifetime, but was often passed down from generation to generation. Thus attired, she drove down to the parish priest's house with one of her boys and entered the presbytery grounds.

The old priest in his cassock, was walking up and down in the sunshine, along the gravelled path that lay along the southern walls of his house. He was thinking of many things, pondering many things in his old, syllogistic fashion, wondering most of all, whether he had not been labouring all his life under the mistake that Law is the finality of Being, and that he had never discerned that there may be something higher than Law, or a Law beyond Law, and that is Love! He had never seemed to doubt before that rigid, inexorabled Law was the governing Power of the Universe; and that it was only mute and unquestioning obedience to its behests that saved the Universe and the souls of men from irreparable ruin.

He would as soon have doubted the conclusions of a proposition in Euclid, or a formal syllogism, as this. It was his Faith—the cardinal principle of his life; and he had always prided himself on the strict and unexpectional manner in which he had acted on the principle. It was the bulwark of the Church and State and people. Remove that, or tamper with it, and down comes everything in hopeless and inretrievable ruin. But now something higher than mere reason told him that throughout the vast universe there was a something higher and holier than Law—or rather that the highest of all laws — the Supreme Excellence was Love. That murmur amongst the people at Mass; that bold expression of unlettered peasants, when they told him he was utterly mistaken; and his own tears—were the eloquent defenders of the sublime thesis that "Love is Creation's Final Law." And then, by a logical, but painful transition, he suddenly asked himself—After all, was Annie right? Was her act of self-immolation, too, although it seemed to him to transgress the laws of propriety, still in perfect consonance with the higher decrees which, in the name of humanity, had been confirmed and consecrated by common consent?

It was whilst he was thus agitated, that he heard the sound of the heavy cart-wheels crunching the gravel before the door, and his old housekeeper immediately after announcing to him that Mrs. Duggan was waiting to see him.

She hadn't seen her parish priest for some months: and she was much shocked at the alteration in his appearance, and deeply touched when she saw him groping his way in utter darkness.

"Wisha, yer reverence," "you will forgive me callin' on you in yer throuble but sure I hard all about your sermon this mornin'—and are you goin' to lave us?"

"Sit down, Mrs. Duggan," he said, extending his hand blindly to her, "it is good of you to come and see me; and you having such a weight of trouble on yourself."

"Well, sure, welcome be the will of God," she said. "It is a sore, hard trrial enough for me in me old age. But sure, nothing better could come from the dhrinkin' and the fightin' an' the card-playin.' An' all that was bad enough, if he hadn't turned agin his priests."

The priest said nothing; but waited.

"An' is it thrue, yer reverence, that you're goin' away from us?"

"'Tis, Mrs. Duggan," he said. "You see I am old and now I'm run blind; and 'tis a big parish, and I wouldn't feel easy in my conscience to keep it, when I couldn't do all that I ought to do for the people."

"Wisha, thin, yer reverence will forgive me for sayin' it; but the people wor sayin' couldn't his reverence get another curate, and resht himself?"

"I'm afraid not," he said. "The parish is large, but the population is much lessened by emigration. The place wouldn't support three priests."

"But sure the people, yer reverence, av you only axed them, or put up your finger, 'ud incrase their jues, and give all you want."

He shook his head mournfully. He was afraid to deny it now, because it would take away the beautiful impressions left on his memory since the morning. But it was too late.

"It was too late now to think of it," he said. "Tell me about your own trouble."

"There isn't much to tell, yer reverence," she replied. "We have done all in our power for this misfortunate bhoy; but I'm afraid 'tis no use. Everythin' is agin him; and he'll give no help himself."

"Why doesn't he tell his solicitor all he knows," said the priest, "and why doesn't he protest his innocence?"

"Maybe he can't," said the poor mother, lifting up her hands and letting them fall in her lap. "Maybe he can't; and he knows 'tis no use!"

"He was remanded last Thursday?" said the priest. "Was he not?"

"He was, yer reverence, and taken up to Cork Gaol; an' he'll be brought down nixt Thursday with the handcuffs on him, and the whole wurrald lookin' at him."

The thought of her boy handcuffed as a spectacle to the world was too much for her, and she broke into a fit of weeping.

He let her alone, until she calmed herself and again asked:

"Will there be any new, any additional evidence against him, do you think?"

"Wisha, we don't know, yer reverence," she replied. "I'm tould the police are scourin' the counthry right an' left, and axin' all kinds of questions about the poor bhoy. An' there he is, not a word out of him. He won't say Iss, Aye or No, to any question he axed. All he'll say is, 'I'll be hanged, an' I deserved it.'"

"That's very bad," said the priest, thoughtfully. "He is sinking into despair. Is there anything new discovered?"

"Nothin', as I tould yer reverence. But they say the police wor down at the ould castle all day on Saturday. And there's no knowing what these haythens may swear, if they are paid for it."

"Many and many a time I warned the people against the gypsies," he said in his old tone of complaint; but he suddenly stopped. Complaints and recriminations were no more for him.

"Tarue for your reverence," said the old woman, catching the word. "But the people had their own way; and much good has it done them."

After another long pause, he said:

"I suppose he'll be committed now to the summer assizes. Or, they may remand him again and again. But I wish the boy would break silence. It would help to establish his innocence."

"And maybe your reverence thinks that he is innocent—that he never done the deed?" she cried, with awakened hope.

"Do you mean Dick?" he said.

"Av coorse, I do, yer reverence. 'Tis of Dick I'm talkin'."

"Dick no more murdered Ned Kerins than I did," said the priest. "And God will prove his innocence to the world, as you'll see."

"Oh thin, may the Almighty God power his blessings down on you every day you live," said the poor woman, from whose heart a mighty load was now lifted. "Sure I don't care what happens now, so long as he hasn't the sin of murder on his sowl. Let 'em hang and quarter him if they likes. Sure many an innocent man was hanged in Ireland before. So long as I know that he didn't sind that unfortunate man to judgment with his sin on his sowl."

"But," said the priest solemnly, not heeding her words, "you mustn't breathe to man or mortal what I've said to you. The officers of the law are clever; and they would block every effort on your son's behalf if they knew them. So you must promise me now that what has happened here this afternoon will be as secret as the grave."

"You may depind on me, yer reverence," she said.

"The life of your son depends on your silence," he repeated.

"Oh thin, oh thin, oh thin," she cried kissing the priest's hand in an ecstasy of gratitude, "may the Lord forgive him and thim who didn't know what kind of priesht they had, till they lost him."

"Mind," he said, "I didn't say that I, but God would save your son. And remember, God is only moved by prayer; and above all, by a mother's prayers."

TO BE CONTINUED

A REPLY TO ARCHDEACON ARMITAGE

Rev. P. W. Brown

Editor Catholic Record:

In a recent issue of your paper Archdeacon Armitage, of St. Paul's Church, Halifax, delivers what he evidently considered a reply to your trenchant animadversion on the said Archdeacon's historic inaccuracies in connection with the Head of the Anglican Church. I do not intend dealing with the multitudinous *red herrings* which the Archdeacon has drawn in such a masterly but fallacious manner across the trail of truth; but I will simply deal with some of the more patently inaccurate statements. By way of preface I wish to strike a personal note. Some years ago I had occasion to issue a public correction (during a meeting of the Historical Society of Nova Scotia, in the city of Halifax) to the Archdeacon in connection with some *claims* (not unlike those which he attributes to that well-informed and representative (?) Irishman, Frank Hugh O'Donnell) regarding the paternal and charitable attitude of early Anglicanism in the British Colonies. The *claims* vanished into very thin air when the sunlight of accurate history shed its luminous rays upon the question at issue.

You have already dealt with the calumny against the Jesuits. As a palliation for his unwarranted assertion, the Archdeacon resurrects the bogie of the Clementine document suppressing the Jesuits. This document was not a Bull, as the Archdeacon asserts; it was a Brief; and this Brief (*Dominus ac Redemptor*) was not promulgated in the form customary for papal Constitutions intended as laws of the Church. It was not affixed to the gates of St. Peter's or in the Campo di Fiore (the regular process of promulgation.) Nor was it communicated in legal form to the Jesuits in Rome; the general and his assistants alone received the notification of their