

LUKE DELMEGE.

BY THE REV. P. A. SHEEHAN, AUTHOR OF "MY NEW CURATE," "GEOFFREY AUSTIN: STUDENT," "THE TRIUMPH OF FAILURE," "CITRAHA MEA," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII. EUTHANASIA.

Sir Athelstan Wilson had got all he coveted in this life, and all he desired in eternity, which he regarded as a vague, ill-defined, and unscientific quality. He had snatched out of the teeth of Orange men a dainty morsel. They gnashed their teeth in rage; and he—well, he was not satisfied. Who is well, where's the use in tearing a morsel to tatters? But there were two things that spoiled his pleasure. That agile and most modest microbe still defied his solicitations, and there was a blank in his life besides. For he missed, in the morning and the evening, the face and figure of his child; the little carresses that smothered out, the little caresses that furrowed and assured of Time and Care. And then he did not understand why she should be sacrificed. He always thought Antigone a fool to trouble so much about a corpse.

"Why don't these clergymen mind their own business?" he said to his good wife. "They are forever intermeddling in family matters. Barbara would be here at home but for that excellent brother of yours."

"I'm sure the Canon is not to blame," she whispered; "Louisa could not be left alone, and you know this house would be no asylum for him."

"I never intended it should," said the doctor. "That young gentleman must reap his wild oats where he sowed them. But if your charitable brother is so devoted to Louisa, has he not a room at his presbytery to give him?"

"He has already offered his hospitality to Louisa and Barbara," said the mother, with a little of the old spirit. "When they return from this brief trip they will stay with their uncle until Louisa's health is completely restored."

"I will be a protracted visit," said the doctor. "It will be a pleasant one," returned Lady Wilson. "Thank God, my children have found in their priests their best and kindest friends."

Which shows that Lady Wilson had a little both of mother love and mother wit.

But I don't care to throw it away in curiosity. "You're joking. They'll pray for you in the Cathedral while you're in the proximity of death; but I was saying that distinguished man, a graduate of Heidelberg, a good German scholar, is banished to a strip of sand down by the sea, which he calls a parish. I assure you he would do honor to any diocese or a church in England."

"Precisely bad. Have you approached the Bishop here?" "No, not yet. But that's all right. I don't want much. I'm not ambitious. But there's a little place down there in Sussex, where a resident priest is badly wanted. I shall propose to the Bishop to allow me to open a mission there. Of course, the income is miserable, but I can eke out a subsistence with my pen."

"Have you tried as yet that expedient way of making ends meet?" "Well, no. But I know that Dr. Drysdale manages to make a clear hundred a year with his pen."

"Oh! Well," said Father Sheldon, shrugging his shoulders, "I suppose you must only await the Bishop's decision. By the way do you know Hallowell?"

"Yes, well, a clever fellow. Indeed, the only one in my congregation that I fear on Sundays."

"Indeed? You needn't fear him much longer, I think."

"How? Is he going abroad?" "No. He has started a religion of his own, like all good Englishmen. He calls himself an 'eclectic.'"

one day spectre of the fatal morning one day nearer; and Oh! the long hours of consciousness, unbroken by one single moment's distraction from the sense horror that haunts him; and Oh! the presence of these silent warders, watching, watching, lest the wretched victim should escape the vengeance of the law; and the very luxury of the food that is proffered and sent away uncast, as if food could quench the burning wheels of a brain on fire with dread foreboding; and the cold, calculated sympathy, whilst the meshes are tightening around the doomed one; and finally, the hideous drama on the fatal morning, to which stage representations, so cold and but stage representations, do the hand of mercy, choke out the immortal soul; and then the unspeakable mockery of calling this hideous and hideous tragedy a "painless death"; Oh! 'tis all too dreadful even for this polished and cultured generation, that knows nothing and cares less for the charity of Christ.

It was a happy distraction for Luke that his sympathies were engaged in soothing the last days of this unhappy man; for his own supreme folly would otherwise have driven him half-mad. Yes! Hallowell had apostatized; and the fine eclecticism of Amiel Lefeville could not mitigate the shame or the horror. The positive, divine truth of the Catholic truth never struck Luke so forcibly as when he read the mystic of faith was a dangerous doctrine to be met; principles to be defended—all this sounded commonplace to a dilettante, and scarcely affected his sense of responsibility. But "a soul lost by your misdirection!" The thought was too dreadful. The sad work of preparing a criminal for death came as a relief. But how Luke was tortured during that month of gloom his diary testifies.

"August 18.—Said Mass for Hallowell. Poor fellow, gone abroad. No trace, visited Donnelly. Bearing up well, he says, but in the morning when he frigid sermons he would do mischief. He couldn't understand that I must keep pace with the age and read up all that it has to say. You couldn't expect a man like Hallowell to sit still under first, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, fifthly, sixthly of the old-fashioned pronouns. But it is so hard to convince old fossils of these things that seem axiomatic."

"Quite so. But Hallowell went further. It was an article in the Athenaeum that revealed him. Something about the Book of Thoth."

Luke turned white and crimson alternately. It was a dread shock to a soul that, if anything, was faithful beyond measure to his old principles and beliefs. The thought that he, Luke Delmege, through false notions of culture, sprung from human vanity, should actually be instrumental in wrecking the faith of an able and distinguished convert, was too horrible. He could conceive no more dire calamity. He knew well what Father Sheldon meant; and the old text about "the lying prophets" smote on his memory. He foresaw the consequences to himself. But he was too generous to heed them. He only thought that he had been instrumental in imperiling the salvation of a soul. The two friends walked up and down in silence for a time. Then Luke moaned aloud; but, choking down his emotion, he said humbly:

"Let us return. I must catch the evening train to Aylesburgh."

It was a very gentle, conscience-stricken man that entered the county prison next morning. In cell 21, on the first corridor, he found his prisoner.

orles are forever seeking to fling over the blame of their apostasies on others. Even the good Cardinal; 'England did not abandon the faith; she was robbed of it.' Bosh! Poor Donnelly calmer, except in the morning. Yes; that holds its prey, it swung to and fro within a foot from where he stood. Then, like a drunken man, he staggered down the scaffold and made his way to the corridor. He heard some one say, "Not a hitch!"

The Governor followed hastily to proffer hospitality. That must never be forgotten. "It passed off well, sir! Quite a painless death! You look pale! Have a glass—"

CHAPTER XXIII. THE RHINE FALLS.

"Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." And Father Meade, successor to Father Tim in the parish of Gortagoahel, had been a dream. And although he had been teaching for forty years that it was no more to give credit to dreams, fortune-telling, or to attach any importance to mere words and accidents, it is regrettable to have to record that Father Meade believed in that dream. He thought he was down by the sea, near Father Martin's, and it was a wild, tempestuous night; dark as Erebus, but for the white flecks in the tumult of waves and the white sheets that floated to his feet. He did not know what brought him there; but as he gazed out on the midnight desolation he heard a cry afar off; and out from the swirl of waters, and conquering the screams of the storm, came clearly and distinctly to his ears the words: Allua! Allua! Allua! Then he thought Luke Delmege rushed down from the cliffs and plunged into the boiling waters, and—Father Meade awoke, and when he had gathered together his scattered senses, he asked himself angrily: What did I eat? For he pinned himself on his constitutional habits, and had arranged with his stomach and the Fates that he would see a century at least. Then he decided it was "corned beef," a dish rather dangerous from its attractive-ness.

"I should have taken a second tumbler," he murmured, and dropped to sleep again. But when morning dawned, and he sat meditatively by his fire, for the frosts had come early this year, his dream recurred to him again and again; and Allua! Allua! rang in his ears and floated across the lines of the psalms in his Breviary. And somehow the syllables were familiar, although memory refused to unlock the secret for a long time. Then, very suddenly, he went of wont of memory, a scene flashed upon his mind. It was a convent school, there in the heart of the city; and there was an "exhibition." That is, the children were all in their Sunday dresses, and there were good piles of currant-cake on the side tables, and very beautiful singing of grand old Irish melodies, and an address to himself. And then a dear little child stepped to the front and, with immitable self-possession, commenced to recite Callanan's famous poem:

There is a green island in lone Gouganeone But she tripped at the next line, for the Easter hymns were in her ears, and she slumbered into—

Where Ailolius of song rushes forth like an arrow. And Allua became her nickname from that day forward. Now, Father Meade, then a dashing young curate, was enthusiastic; and in his delight and ecstasy, he made a speech and the speech contained a promise. It was a rash one, as may be supposed.

faint ruffling marked where the great leap of the mighty river was challenged by the inswelling tide. But there was neither wind nor wave; and yet, as the old priest looked, he found it not difficult to imagine that Allua! Allua! was borne to his ears across the waste of waters. He turned homeward, puzzled and anxious; but as his road ran down by the shrubbery that fringed the outer wall of Father Martin's garden, he thought he might give a call. The result was that a few days later, when Luke had recovered from the shock he had received and was able to open his correspondence, he read:

"My dear Father Delmege—If you should come across, in your travels through London or elsewhere, a little girl (but now, I suppose, a young woman), answering to the name of Allua, tell her I have got her message, and will befriend her, if she is in trouble, as I suspect. Faithfully yours, "WILLIAM MEADE, P. P."

"That's an exact counterpart to the letter addressed: 'My son in America,'" said Luke; and he thought no more of it. Especially as the same mail had brought him a letter from his Bishop, very kind and sympathetic, warning him of the seriousness of the step he was meditating, and assuring him of a mission at home if he could only make up his mind to return.

"I think," said Luke, "as you were educated for your own diocese, you ought to serve in your own diocese. But I shall not recall you against your own wishes."

"Then the ground is not quite cut from under my feet," said Luke; and he wrote promptly to say that he would return for the 1st of October, after a brief trip on the Continent, whither he had been ordered by his physician. He ran up to the city to explain his intentions. He remained for dinner. He was seated next a mighty traveller—a kind of latter-day Abbe Huc, who was infinitely polite and condescending, asked Luke many questions, and gave him valuable information as to his route to Switzerland. Luke was very happy in thinking that his own amiability promptly secured friends in all directions. There was not a word about Hallowell, or the slightest allusion to the Canon Drysdale or Aylesburgh. His seven years' apprenticeship was unnoted. Nor was there a syllable of regret that he was no longer to labour and live 'mongst them.

Two nights after, Luke stood on the platform of the station at the frontier town of Herbenthal. His train was stunted to make way for the great continental express. Luke walked up and down, having given his valise to a porter, and he saw representatives of every nation under heaven. At twelve o'clock the great express rolled in, lighted from stem to stern; and the long corridor that ran from end to end of the train was thronged with passengers, whose very presence indicated that their lines had been cast in pleasant places in this life, and that they were determined to make the most of the opportunity. Luke was half afraid of these elect of society; for, although he had learned a good deal during his apprenticeship, he was fortunate enough as yet to have retained a little of his idealism. He had not yet reached that dread stage in life where everything has become mean and commonplace under the gray aspects of experience. But the very thought of all these people, and the very sight of them, and the very sight of the gentleman who was dressed in a gray travelling suit, and had a Scotch plaid shawl rolled round his shoulders; but it is—no—it must be the face of the Abbe Huc. The face was looking down with calm indifference at Luke, with the unmistakable expression: "I know you well, but I don't want to improve the acquaintance. But Luke's Celtic impetuosity refused to accept the hint; and half sure of himself, and yet afraid to commit a stupid blunder, he approached, lifted his hat, and said: "Pardon, Monsieur: je suis un pretre Catholique."

The traveller drew himself up proudly, and said: "Et moi, je suis aussi un pretre Catholique."

Luke was dumbstricken. This was the man by whose side he had sat two nights ago, and who had been so polite and so solicitous as if he had known Luke for a lifetime. Luke drew back now, stung with the cold refusal of acquaintance; and the train moved on. But the Abbe Huc watched him, watched him to the end. Luke was learning a little of the world, and the knowledge was creating a strange yearning for home.

There was a pretty little episode just as his own train was about to start. Like all good travellers, Luke was determined to guard against imposition but to be generous. And so when a gorgeous official approached him and said something in German, of which Luke understood but one word, commissaire, Luke shook his head sadly. But when the porter came up with his valise, Luke was generous and even royal. He handed the porter a coin, which he thought amply rewarded him for his labor. The porter smiled, lifted his hat, bowed, and departed, but returned in a moment furious. He leaped into the carriage, and gesticulated wildly, holding the wretched coin in his hand, and muttering *plennig!*

It would be difficult to say by what process of reasoning Luke had persuaded himself that a *plennig* was a German equivalent of a franc; but so it was, and this accounted for his royal gesture. But there was a difference of opinion clearly; and it emphasized itself in sundry gestures and objurgations, the magnificent commissaire looking on approvingly.

"Un *plennig!* oui, oui! c'est un franc!" said Luke. The porter stamped about the carriage and tore his hair. "Cela suffit pour vous!" said Luke, calmly, and determined not to be swindled.

The German appealed to the stars and angels. These falling, he appealed to the commissaire. The latter rolled out a string of decasyllables. Luke was convinced it was a conspiracy. He talked wonderful French. They talked wonderful German.

train moved out slowly along to the carriage of Theon, breathing a part of the great river, and as they plunged into congratulated himself. And then through a Cologne and the Rhine through the Black Mountains, through the thicket that gaped out of the way, swallowed the train; it; up, up, through the along the crest of hills nestled the loveliest of its church and spire until at last they were in the Thon a Schaffhausen, were at Schaffhausen, legendary river curves in childish humor before majesty of its seaward Here Luke sojourned golden days that were plentiful from the That Sunday at the a dream for a lifetime to early Mass at the beautiful Gregorian since he left Maynooth understanding, the that stretched through breakfasted at 1 through the only under the great river fret feet, and the horizon yellow crests of trees in the afternoon he walk and climbed H the narrow and lim surroundings of the a superb panorama the eyes from the high fairly took away his he said, lifting his the castle, as if N The clear air, the horizon, the vast in plain barriers, closing opening the imagin sublimities, the lo Rhine flowing amid orchards, the village red roofs here and landscape, a hill cre the j and the co her "prentice hand here eternal maste her and there, lit bath air—Luke tho as he sat and liste children, singing a S amongst the pines, factor, the smoke an mill called "Englan the j and the co mechanism were f said Luke. "That with it and the up He turned round to ity and came face to Had they been to have passed each One was a Briton, a "How do you This is a rare pleas "How do you surprised to see me "I did not know abroad," continued hope that you inter this delightful com hours," replied Luke. TO BE CO

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"See them beans say, situated in A potatoes, or carrot plaguey old maple an 'it's got to be lovely tree? Why so much of it?"

"What d'ye sup Mis' Millray think of my garden? These last twenty years the j and the co limbs here spread of all creation. I say o!" As if sum her favorite tree, the fence from the man and his prett; peared a plump and woman.

"Not bad, Mr. this confounded of "My tree, do yo do you go under a want shade? I of est place in Taylo maple."

"Yes, sire,— coldness does for an 'turnips? Hal by that plaguey rare garden, I pull teeth out of "Now that's to began the widow rowgrass—"

"Sparrowgrass man. 'You'll be next, an' I'd be Seelin' we're on as well be it should out of all over an' shade my 'twill 'bout sp trunk's only w fence, but rights no man nor wome me our my gard "Why, Jim Beish idea!" said th' know as well as call that our ' wouldn't hurt it, Jesie there. "I hope I'll be from injurin' o' an' you don't see that air tree, mean to be rea was. We'll cut time, so 'twont 'bout as good on in' it's at the difference is it if 'tree, anyow? were in rather as the widow tree law net and hej "That all the

THE SALTING

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