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KILBENNY CHAPEL.

The site of Kilbenny chapel stood on a slight declivity of one of the many undulating hills and valleys gradually approaching the mighty Galtees, in the county of Tipperary, where brave and true men are to be found—God bless the men of Tipperary, for they are ever to be found when their country needs their services—the “matchless men of Tipperary.” It was a little rustic building in the form of a cross, and was so situated as to be seen from every point of the compass. On one side it was sheltered by a thick grove of young fir trees—on the other, by a high double ditch, crowned by dense clumps of broad yellow furze, under which ran a rapid stream, that made its way through a tract of soft and healthy bogland. The unpresuming house of God was covered by a thatch of straw and fir-branches, on its outside—and the bores of the same trees acted as pillars within—the altar was primitive and merely covered by a white cloth, and behind it the vestry boasted of a little fire place, a shelf, which supported a bowl and spoon, from which the good old pastor breakfasted on Sundays, for his parish was large, and he had a long way to come. The neighbors contended who should supply him with his quantum of fresh new milk in the summer, or light his fire in the winter; to boil his eggs, and have his meat hot and comfortable, when the Mass was over; the fir trees again doing duty in the matter of fuel, as well as their many other services.

It was on a Sunday morning, that all the folk in the neighborhood and from all parts of the surrounding district were assembled, attending the holy mysteries. The chapel was crowded, the old people occupying the place nearest to the rails of the sanctuary; the men, with their snow-white heads bowing down in meek reverence; the matrons in adoring silence, clothed in their wide, long mantles, with their hair bound up in large red handkerchiefs, the ends of which hung down loosely behind them. The younger portion of the population occupied the middle of the building, young men and women, whilst behind them knelt the rising generation, with their young offspring whom they endeavored to keep in order by many and seasonable admonitions, as they, time after time, stopped their devotion to look after their proceedings. One little urchin caused his mother very many distractions, by his marked admiration of the evolutions of a swallow, which was eddying about the roof, and in a thousand noiseless flights, visiting every nook and crevice that might possibly afford a site for his projected nest-building. The child might be eight or nine years old, with black, straight hair hanging down on his shoulders, cheeks brown and ruddy, with rude health and mountain ramblings, eyes black as coals, and large, liquid and lustrous. Whilst under the immediate surveillance of his guardian, his little hands were piously joined and raised in seeming prayer;—but the moment her attention was called away, and her hands resumed, those innocent large orbs went once more in search of the headlong flight of the bird, and were lit up with joy and admiration at its many feats of investigation. A look from the gentle peasant mother soon again fixed his wandering gaze, and an appealing whisper into his ear, entirely subdued him; he looked up straight into that kind and benevolent face that never wore anything but a smile for him;—the tears rose in his eyes, and the obedient boy set in earnest about saying his little stock of the prayers of childhood, only looking now and then for another approving glance, for another commending smile, as a reward for his ready and willing compliance.

The Mass was over, and the venerable pastor, Father Michael Maher, was just uttering solemnly, and with raised arms, the “Benedictus. Omnipotens Deus!” when a woman rushed wildly into the chapel, crying out at the top of her voice:

“Father Michael, the Wolf is outside; his troopers are looping the trees and backing the furze bushes, to set fire to the roof over your head!”

The men sprang to their feet, the women screamed. “My people! my people! my own people!” inquired the priest, in a loud, impassioned voice, “hear me, hear God’s minister, and your old guide, before you move a foot from this sacred house.” The men stood still. “God bless ye,” cried out the grateful priest, “God bless ye! now I will go myself and reconstate with these violent intruders.” “They’ll hurt you, Father Michael,” remonstrated many of his flock, “They’ll hurt you, if we are not by your side.” “God will be by my side, and between them and me,” devoutly replied the fearless priest. He then hid the chalice in a secret part of the wall, made for the purpose—a necessary precaution in those sacrilegious times, and solemnly walking down from the altar, proceeded along amongst his flock, and firmly strode out into the open air, holding a small wooden crucifix in his hand. In the meantime, a very significant movement

was made by the peasantry; one body of men rushed to the door leading from the chapel by the vestry; there they stood, watching narrowly the result of the mission of their beloved pastor, and determined to be ready to aid him if there were need; another body of men stood within the larger door way, armed with heavy sticks, and resolved to attack the troopers if necessary, before they could get on their horses; each woman stood close behind her husband, and would not leave her position for any entreaty. Poor faithful women, they thought that if there should be a bloody battle, that they might shield their husbands’ bodies with their own. The children were all placed on the altar-steps, and the old men congregated about the immediate vicinity of the front door, with the positive order not to let the enemy close it when the fray began. This order at once will show the reader what manner of men these red coated military heroes were, when the peasantry were convinced they would shut up as many men, women and children as they could, and set fire to the building to consume all together. Hence, the order to the old men was absolutely necessary.

Let us now accompany Father Maher on his perilous enterprise, and see how the minister of the Lord confronted the emissaries of the devil. About forty soldiers were busily engaged dragging furze and branches of trees towards the chapel. Some of the troopers held the horses of those merciful workmen in the shade of the fir grove, whilst the “wolf” himself, sitting quietly in his saddle superintended the whole operations. The priest advanced and caught his eye in an instant. “Ha, ha!” laughed the wolf of the Galtees; “is the old fox unearthed already?” “Earl of Kingston!” exclaimed the holy and venerable man—“Earl of Kingston! I adjure you in the name of the living God, not to desecrate this sacred Sabbath morning with murder and sacrilege!”

Here the little boy already described in the chapel, stepped quietly out, and stood between the two speakers, looking at each curiously and alternately.

“How dare you impose your commands upon me, Father Dotard,” retorted the wolf, reddening with rising anger.

“I dare say anything in the name of God, and under the shadow of His Holy Cross,” replied the priest steadily.

“I dare do more,” he continued, advancing toward the hardened soldier.

“At him, Lion,” cried the Earl, “at him!”

A huge black dog bounded from amongst the horses, and standing with head erect and blazing eyes, looked about for his victim. Some of the men at the vestry door stepped out to be in time, but the little boy sidged up to the excited animal, and put his two tiny arms around his horrid shaggy neck. The brute acknowledged the kindness by lowering his head and wagging his tail.

The Earl foamed, and putting spurs to his horse, rode up, calling fiercely to the dog to come to him.

But the noble brute crouched only closer to the child, who patted his great head, and fondled him the more kindly.

“Here Lion,” now fairly roared out his exasperated master; the dog loosened himself away reluctantly from the arms that still embraced him, and crawling towards the horse’s feet, seemed to look up to the rider for pardon. But the wolf never pardoned, and had no mercy; he drew a pistol and fired the contents of it into the animal’s body; he then drew a second pistol, but before he could make any use of it, there was a cry from the chapel, “Draw in Father Michael amongst ye!” “Take care of the child.”

“To horse! to horse!” roared Kingston.

It was too late, about twenty stalworth peasants had already sprung forward, and getting between the industrious furze, draggers and their horses, quickly overwhelmed the men who held them, and possessed themselves of all the holster-pistols, and the short carbines which were stacked upon the ground. Then taking their stand behind the animals, they quietly awaited the further proceedings of the enemy.

The wolf was thunderstricken; his men had now but their swords, which they had been using in cutting down the furze to set fire to the chapel.

To add to his discomfiture, the now confident peasantry heard his order, “To horse,” and replied to it by a loud laugh.

Father Maher again appeared as a peace-maker.

“Give them their horses, boys,” he said, “and let them go their ways; we are not going to follow their example, either in plundering or murdering, give them their horses, they cannot harm us now, and, for heaven’s sake, let us be quit of them.”

“Father Michael, they do not deserve it from us, nor a less thing.”

“No matter, now, my good friends, let them go, let them go, for God’s sake, for my sake.”

With a bad grace, and not without much grumbling, the people relinquished their horses; and the crest fallen soldiers quickly remounted, awaiting commands.

“Let my men have their arms, now, Sir Priest,” demanded the Earl.

“Hold the arms, for your lives,” exclaimed Father Maher.

A loud cheer of gratified acquiescence followed this wholesome advice, at which the wolf writhed with impotent rage.

“Take my knightly honor,” he said, scornfully, “that no use shall be made of the weapons against ye.”

“My children,” said Father Maher, addressing the people in turn, “never mind the knightly honor of a man who would burn to death both you and me in one merciless flame, in our poor chapel yonder.”

A shout of denial and defiance followed this second and most palatable recommendation.

“Go on, Sir Earl,” commanded the Priest, sternly, “and repent of your crimes and pride while there is yet time. We forgive you, and may God forgive you your meditated massacre this blessed Sabbath morning.”

“Forward!” cried the wolf savagely, to his men, “forward!” and as they spurred after their lord and master, the poor mangled dog attempted to follow.

The poor mangled brute, we said, attempted to follow his cruel master; he succeeded in reaching the Earl’s boot with a feeble bound, but poured over it his heart’s blood. The sight seemed to touch even that cruellest of men, and as the dying animal fell back, tumbled under his horse’s feet in his last agony.

“Poor Lion,” he muttered, as he bent down for an instant, and saw him expire with a single convulsive shudder.

Yes, even that wolfish heart succumbed to a feeling of human nature, although but for a brute. Thus, history tells us, that some solitary hand strewed flowers upon the grave of Nero.

It was not, in accordance with his habit, that the naughty and intolerant Earl should return to his castle, without satisfying, to some extent at least, the innate cruelty of his disposition. Accordingly, as he and his men rode furiously thro’ the country, exasperated at their late defeat, and thirsting for vengeance on somebody, or anybody, or anything, to allay the fever of their buffed malice. They set fire to hay and haggard, to roof trees and corn stacks—they latched the cattle and pursued their flying owners—and, in fine, perpetrated any outrage that chance put in their way, or that their too retentive memories dictated to them. They were the rulers of the land—the rulers and the law givers.

Unfortunately in their furious headlong course, they came up with a travelling peasant who was journeying from one part of the country to the other. He was instantly stopped, questioned, and assaulted. The man’s name was John Galway—an Irishman and a Celt to the back-bone.

He knew the intolerant despots he had to deal with, and that he had no mercy to expect at their hands. Accordingly his demeanor was firm and resolute, and neither insult nor violence could exact from him that slavish whine of terror and cowardance which his persecutors expected their presence should inspire.

After rifling his person for a long time in search of some testimony of crime or treason—as luck should have it, one of the party found a paper concealed in his hat—a shout of triumph announced the discovery, and the document was forthwith presented to the Earl. The gallant commander, however, was not a scholar—at least he was not able to make any hand of the important manuscript. The sergeant of the band thought it was Greek. An old drummer who had served in the line, and who was for a number of years on foreign service, pronounced it to be French—that was enough. Of course it was rask treason, and the wolf ordered the prisoner, off hand, to be flogged to death. From a neighboring farm yard, a horse and cart was at once procured, and the man strapped thereto by the belts of the yeomanry; but now there occurred a little difficulty—the cart was wanting.

“That very necessary implement of torture was for once forgotten in the outfit of the morning—an unusual oversight. ‘Break down some of the boughs from that tree yonder, and scourge him with them,’ cried the wolf.

“It is an elder tree, my Lord.

“Well, Judas, they say, hanged himself from such a one, the better then it is to flog a rebel.”

Accordingly they pulled their boughs, and having stripped their victim, commenced the work of torture in right down earnest. One of the party driving the horse along, whilst all the rest, one after one, dismounted to inflict the punishment, taking the bloody rods from their tired companions. The sufferer bore all with scarcely a groan, although the flesh was peeling away from his bare back from the unceasing flagellation.

The wolf eagerly listened for a cry or even

a murmur, but no—the helpless man never winced—never even moaned. At length they came to a narrow mountain stream with a clean channel of sand and stones, and while the horse stopped to drink, the yeoman amused themselves by rubbing handfuls of gritty alluvia into the wounds they were so mercilessly inflicting. This was too much for human nature to endure in utter silence—and so, the poor fellow fairly cried out, “O Lord! O Lord!”

“I do not pity you a bit, you rebel villain,” scoffed the wolf of the Galtees, thinking that the man addressed himself to him.

“You!” exclaimed the bleeding rebel scornfully, and looking up into his face—“You! I do not mean you, you cowardly tyrant.”

“Untie the fellow, untie the fellow,” commanded the discomfited Earl, afraid of a repetition of such contemptuous language to the hearing of his vassals. “Untie him, and we will hunt him thro’ the country.”

This was an admirable thought—a sport, indeed, frequently practised by the heroic corps of whom we write.

The prisoner was unloosed.

“Now, fly for your life, you dog, for the first man who overtakes you will cut you down.”

The mangled wretch was one pool of blood; but, nevertheless, his indomitable spirit was still alive. He stooped, and taking up the gory sticks with which he was tortured, in one hand, he picked up a heavy stone with the other, and letting fly at the wolf, he missed him, but struck his horse’s head such a violent blow that the animal bounded into the air and threw his rider backward upon the earth. In the confusion, away sprang the fugitive, still holding the crimsoned sticks within his grasp, and making for a boggy land which he knew must baffle his pursuers. On he ran, panting and bleeding, but still bearing up, as the hope of escape became stronger and stronger. He gained the morass, popped over it lightly, just stopping to raise some water in the hollow of his hand to wet his parched lips, and to cool his throbbing temples; then forward again, though now more ploddingly and wearily; he was becoming weaker and weaker. He was now on the banks of the Buncheon; the tramps of the troopers’ horses were momentarily growing more and more audible—well, he could crawl no further. He dropped into the river, just by a thick clump of rushes and submerging his whole body, hid his head amongst them. At that moment the horsemen rode up—they rode past!—he was safe! He thanked God fervently, as their wild hallooos echoed through the mountains, and their foot steps died away upon the wind.

Some time elapsed after those events, and so a very long time neither, when it was whispered throughout the country that the “Wolf of the Galtees” was no more. Many thought the report too good to be true, others disbelieved it altogether, whilst the great majority hoped that if the event did not actually take place, that it soon should. In reality, and in good truth, the stormy Earl’s life was ended—there was no longer any doubt of it; the long trailing black flag was hoisted on the battlements of his castle, and his domestics appeared all in mourning.—The Earl was dead!—the Earl was dead! The news news spread like wild fire all over the land. A cry of joy and exultation followed the announcement wherever it was related, and even more: the peasantry forthwith prepared to celebrate the glad tidings by lighting a prodigious bonfire on a high hill very near, and commanding a full view of the dark stone walls where their arch-enemy was lying a cold and livid corpse.

On that hill, on that sultry night of mid-summer, was assembled a picturesque group of mortals as ever was painted by the magic pencil of Michael Angelo.

In the background was a body of pikemen lying on the grass, each man with his weapon by his side, and the remains of a rude feast scattered about between them. Near them, moved about a number of women and girls who had of late been evidently engaged in a series of culinary undertakings, for a large pot, hung from a triangle of poles, was still boiling merrily away, whilst the smouldering embers of turf and brambles were fuming beneath it.

The foreground, or brow of the hill, was occupied by an enormous pile of furze, brushwood, and other combustibles, ready for the application of the torch, and promising a formidable blaze that would mount up furiously into the heavens. About these materials of a gigantic bonfire, gambolled in continuous circles, numbers of men and boys, all clad in their holiday costume, and as merry and excited as if they were about to celebrate some annual rustic fete. They were waiting for the waning moon, in order that their fire should shine with the greater brilliancy and effect; besides the darkness was to be the signal for other fires to be kindled simultaneously with their own. At length the propitious moment arrived, and a faggot of flogging furze was seen moving towards the ready pyre; in another

instant a rapory cloud of waving smoke crept up lazily into the air, swaying about in gusty volumes, and now and then darting forth a rapid serpent-like tongue of flame from its dark throat, then a thin pillar of light stood up straight in the midst of the dull murkiness, and at last, like a great sun, out opened a broad red sheet of unmingled light swallowing up all the dense darkness, as if at a single gulp, and making it mid-day all over the heathery hill. A loud shout heralded in the glorious conflagration, and was repeated again and again, as the reflection of the red glare danced upon the window panes of the distant sowers.

At this moment a man was seen toiling laboriously and swiftly up the side of the hill and making towards the burning beacon—he came nearer and nearer—the people above recognised him—another deafening cheer followed the discovery—it was John Galway.

Now he was in the midst of them, but to their many warm welcomes and congratulations, he made no reply.

In his arms was a bundle of dried crisped boughs. Nobody there knew their significance—he cast them into the midst of the blazing mass and then, watching them as they quickly burned into ashes.

“There ye go,” he muttered, “follow him, follow him—into ashes, into nothing. God forgive us all, unfortunate sinners.”

The sticks thus reduced to embers were the elder branches, saturated with blood, with which poor Galway had been nearly scourged to death.

THE END.

THE SISTER OF CHARITY;

OR,

THE CROSS AND THE CROWN.

(From the Lamp.)

CHAPTER I.

The story which I am about to relate, dear reader, I heard from a Sister of Charity in America, who had herself known the heroine.—It may interest you as a page of the book of life—so full of strange events and stranger histories, every leaf teeming with incident, and yet all varied. It is true that every man has two lives—the outer and the inner one. Has not the world the same; the outer life we see of events that happen before our eyes, of scenes we witness, of tragedies and comedies played out upon its stage; ah! and also its hidden histories, its many sorrows, that we dream not of, its deep wounds invisible to our eyes? Who shall know the secret history, the hidden life of another; what of conflict, of struggle, what of patient endurance, of calm hardly won, is hidden beneath the exterior of those whose very tranquility we may have envied? If we knew more of each other, how much more love, pity, compassion, and good feeling there would be in the world; it is from that very ignorance of each other’s trials and afflictions that we judge so hardly, and sometimes so unjustly.

In the south of Ireland, near the city of C—, are the ruins of Redmond’s Castle, the seat and heritage of the Redmond family, who flourished for many generations under the Irish kings. All that now remains of its once great beauty and strong massive towers is one old arch with a low wall overgrown with ivy. Beside the arch stands a large stone cross, covered with the moss and ivy of many year’s growth. It is somewhat broken now, and the green moss quite covers its base, while the ivy trails round its arms and falls from it in many graceful festoons. The old countess-yard where the arch stands is now full of trees—old oaks sturdy and strong, elms with shimmering shiny leaves throw fantastic shadows on the grass and reeds, tall and graceful linden trees, where the wind mourns the decay of the old house and the blight of its once proud gay inhabitants. A little brook, the sole remnant of the large moat, runs by the foot of the cross and flows itself in the trees. Redmond’s cross is known to every one far and wide; artists have been to sketch its picturesque beauty, poets have sung of its ivy and moss, of its murmuring brook, and stately trees; and now, in the mellancholy summer light, with the golden sunshine streaming through the thick, green leaves, playing round the ivy tendrils, making the little brook sparkle like diamonds, and bathing the whole in one delicate flood of light,—it is enough to inspire thoughts as beautiful as itself. A short path from the ruins to the fields leads to the highway, and there, on the outskirts of the town, stands the pretty little chapel of Our Lady of Mercy. And now, flocking from all parts, the people hasten to the benediction, for the bells have ceased ringing, and the service has begun. Ah! it is beautiful, this little chapel.—A large stained-glass window is above the altar, and it represents Our Lady of Mercy; her sweet face is bent with a look of tender love and