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GANDLER'S ANNUITY.

Some men are born to greatness, some achieve it, others have it thrust upon them. The case was otherwise as regards the greatness of Gandler. Gandler purchased his greatness, and got it at a bargain. A century ago Gandler sold tripe at Tottleton. He sold good tripe, and consequently was a famous man in his line and time. But Gandler aspired to fame after death—to an immortal name in the ear of succeeding generations of Tottletonians. Tripe was not calculated to do it for him. Posterity would not be likely to remember that their ancestors bought good tripe at the shop of Gandler. But still the tripe seller of Tottleton was resolved that the name of Gandler should be handed down to generations yet unborn. This is how Gandler did it. He made a will, and died. The making of the will was a deliberate affair; but not so the dying part of the business. Gandler did not intend to die when he did; but he could not help himself. In the full vigor of his manhood he fell a victim to hard boiled eggs. They opened Gandler, and declared hard boiled eggs to be the cause, and then they opened the will, and found that the eminent tripe seller of Tottleton, setting aside his relatives, had left all his worldly wealth to be applied to the purposes of charity. The reward of conscientious tripe selling had not been great, for the whole of Gandler's worldly wealth amounted to no more than two hundred pounds. In his will he directed that this sum should be placed out at interest; and that the annual proceeds should go for an annuity to be granted by the votes of the householders of Tottleton to destitute but deserving old men of that parish. It was especially directed that the benevolence should be called 'Gandler's Annuity.'

I was first brought to a knowledge of the name and fame of Gandler about two years ago when I went out to take up my abode at Tottleton. Tottleton is a pretty place in the merry month of July; and the chestnut and laburnum trees which line both sides of the broad white road which constitutes Tottleton's only street are most beautiful to see, especially when they are in full bloom. But there was another beautiful feature of Tottleton which seemed to do it infinitely more credit—its almshouses. It appeared to me that the private houses bore no sort of adequate proportion to them, and that the only houses which did were the public houses. The way in which these two institutions were regularly alternated on both sides of the road for more than a mile suggested that the one was the cause of the other. It seemed as if the public houses had brought the whole neighborhood to poverty, and consigned the entire population to dependence. The mural inscriptions which met the eye told but of two things—strong drink, and old men and women of the parish come to grief. The Cock and Bottle appeared to be responsible for seven poor old men; the Nag's Head for nine poor old women; and the Bell for fourteen orphan girls. There was, however, a striking disproportion between the size of the public houses and that of the almshouses.—The latter were so small and compact and with a large inscription on the front of them, so like a neat parcel, that they might have been brought down from somewhere by the carrier. Possibly they might have been left at the Cock and Bottle till called for. Well; if the sins of Tottleton had been multitudinous, Charity had done her best to cover them.

I had mentally pointed this moral when Mr. Gubbins, running out from the Swan, addressed me. Perhaps I should state that I had honored the Swan with my patronage, as regards the family side else. 'Beg your pardon, sir; but I'll take it as a favor if you will give your vote for Parsley.' I ventured to inquire who Parsley was and what he was standing for. Was it the borough, the county, or simply the vestry? No; Parsley did not aspire so high. He was merely a candidate for Gandler's Annuity.—Parsley's qualifications were all right. He was seventy five years of age, a native of the parish, had paid rates and taxes for over forty years, was eaten up with the rheumatism, was past work, bore an excellent character, and hadn't a penny in the world. Gandler's Annuity, amounting to £9 14s. 7d. would make him happy and comfortable for the remainder of his days. The statement of Parsley's numerous merits in the way of age, destitution and incapacity was not to be resisted, and I think I should have cried 'Parsley forever!' on the spot, only it occurred to me, considering Parsley's age, that it wouldn't be much use. However, I promised to enter an appearance on the following evening, and vote for Parsley. When at the appointed time I turned out into the village, and came in sight of the Swan's swinging sign, I could see that something was creating a great sensation. It was the election for Gandler's Annuity. Could Gandler have looked up from his grave, he would have had no

regrets on the score of the hard boiled eggs. The fatal indigestion had awoke to a glorious immortality. The honored name of Gandler was an every mouth. The boys shouted it in triumph; the grown up people murmured it in grateful admiration; and in the bow window of the Swan it was inscribed in large letters, hind side foremost, in the innocent idea that an inscription designed to be read from the inside could be easily deciphered from the out.

On mingling with the little crowd that had collected round the horseblock under the Swan's swinging sign, I found the merits of the candidates being discussed with great animation. I saw candidates; for I now learned for the first time that Parsley was not the only one. There was another, and his name was Barrowfield.—Would I vote for Barrowfield?

According to the representations of his friends at the horseblock, Barrowfield was aged, indigent, and afflicted to an unprecedented extent. One bold partisan ventured upon the assertion that Barrowfield had been present at the coronation of George the Third. Another declared that, however that might be, he could testify from his own knowledge that Barrowfield had been present at the artillery practice last Wednesday week, and that he had not even winked when they let off the six hundred pounder. This was adduced in evidence of the profound and stony character of Barrowfield's deafness. It is mentioned, as further supporting Barrowfield's claim to the bounty of the immortal Gandler, that even if he were elected, and were provided with victuals for the rest of his life, it would not be of much advantage to him, as he hadn't a tooth left in his head. It was also stated incidentally that, in the course of his long career, Barrowfield had sustained fractures (mostly compound) of almost every bone in his body; had lost two wives, three cows, and a donkey; and had had his grey hairs brought to the very verge of the grave by the misconduct of a large family of sons and daughters, who, according to the popular account, had fallen in and marched quick step to the bad, in a deliberate manner.

Hearing of the overwhelming merits of Barrowfield, I felt that Mr. Gubbins had not dealt fairly with me. Why had he artfully thrown the veil of silence over the candidature of Barrowfield, and unduly enlisted my sympathies on behalf of Parsley? Entering the bar I demanded of Mr. Gubbins why he had done this thing.—The explanation was this: For five and thirty years regular, Parsley had 'used' the Swan; whereas Barrowfield had 'used' the Plough.—Besides, if I would only take Mr. Gubbins' word for it, Barrowfield, as regards age, infirmity, and destitution, was a fool to Parsley. Would I come and look at Parsley, and judge for myself?

'Certainly.' Whereupon Mr. Gubbins led the way to the parlor, threw open the door, and pointed to a little old man sitting smiling in an imbecile manner, in an arm-chair three sizes too large for him.

'There, sir; how will that suit your fancy for a bald headed, bandy legged, broken down old 'un?'

And Mr. Gubbins went up and patted old Parsley on the head, and turned him about to show his points, as if he had been a superannuated horse.

I was bound to admit that Parsley seemed old enough at any rate, and that his physical dilapidation was all that could be desired in such a case.

A burst of cheering outside announced the arrival of Barrowfield; and I was invited to go and take a look at the opposition. Overpowered by his exertion in walking from his committee room at the Plough, (exactly opposite) Barrowfield was sitting down to rest on the horseblock, surrounded by his partisans. His grey hairs, his feebleness, and his gasps for breath, seemed to be regarded as an expression of his claims to the suffrage of the electors; for the more Barrowfield tried to get his breath and couldn't, the louder his partisans cheered; as much as to say, 'There's infirmity for you; match that if you can!'

Mr. Nobbs the butcher seemed to be Barrowfield's principal supporter. Finding that the boys were getting too much to the front, as they always do on such occasions of popular excitement, Mr. Nobbs rushed in among them, and whisked them away like flies from a sugar cask; the sugar cask, on this occasion being Barrowfield. After walking around Barrowfield and surveying him at all points, Mr. Nobbs seemed to be satisfied that his candidate was up to the mark. Suddenly, however, he perceived that the candidate held something in his right hand.

In the hearing of Mrs. Donovan, Mr. Nobbs wondered very much what Barrowfield had got there. 'Oh, nothin' at all,' said that lady; 'only a

penny I gave the poor old soul, in case he shouldn't get the Annuity.'

Mr. Gubbins now came out to announce that the hour appointed for the election was approaching; Mr. Nobbs had better bring his candidate in doors.

This was easier said than done; for Barrowfield, when he sat down on the horseblock, had, as regards his personal properties and effects, fallen to pieces like a ruin. Mr. Nobbs then proceeded, on architectural principles, to reconstruct him. He put a stick into each hand placed the spectacles on his nose (subsequently to wiping that organ with the pocket handkerchief,) and finally rolled him in with his hat.—The completion of the edifice was hailed with loud applause, which however, proved to be premature; for at that moment Barrowfield suddenly missing his penny, made a spasmodic effort to search for it in his waistcoat pocket, and immediately fell to pieces again.

Mr. Nobbs demanded a pot of porter, with an air of fatigue which might have been taken to represent the exhaustion consequent upon discovering the source of the Nile.

'Well, here's luck, old boy; and I wish you may get it.' This was Mr. Nobbs's address to Barrowfield previous to drinking. After a parenthesis of occupation with the pewter, he continued with an appeal to the electors: Oughtn't he, now?

Although pledged to Parsley—which, under a sense of Barrowfield's superior qualifications, I was beginning to regret—I ventured to say that Barrowfield seemed a worthy object.

'A worthy object!' said Mr. Nobbs; 'I should just think he was an object. Look at him! He's as old as Methusalem, as poor as Job, and as weak as—' failing another scriptural illustration Mr. Nobbs fell back upon—'a rat.'

As if to bear out Mr. Nobbs's words a blue bottle, which had been buzzing about for some time, settled upon Barrowfield's nose, causing him to let go his hold upon his right hand walking stick, the immediate result of which was, that the edifice which had been so carefully erected assumed the attitude of the tower of Pisa. Barrowfield would assuredly have become a total ruin had not Mr. Nobbs promptly rushed to the rescue and shored him up.

Mr. Gubbins, who had hitherto been occupied in serving his customers, here protested against the attempts of Mr. Nobbs to influence the electors in an unfair manner in favor of his own man.

What did Mr. Gubbins mean by an unfair manner, Mr. Nobbs would like to know. Mr. Nobbs meant to say that such language was not parliamentary.

Parliamentary be blowed! Mr. Gubbins meant to say that it was only fair that the electors should see both candidates before they pledged themselves. 'Hodi alterem party' was Mr. Gubbins's motto.

'Very well, then,' said Mr. Nobbs; 'trot out your 'alterem party.'

After some high words it was agreed that Barrowfield should be set down on the chair in the parlor beside Parsley, and that the electors should go in and judge for themselves. Mr. Nobbs accordingly removed Barrowfield to the parlor, and placing him in a chair opposite Parsley, furnished him with a glass of gin and water to keep his spirits up. Mr. Gubbins, not to be outdone in that respect, immediately provided Parsley with a glass of hot rum, which was a liquor a cut above gin at any rate. The two 'objects' were now left alone together; and on the motion of Mr. Gubbins, who though a philanthropist, was also a man of business, the electors returned to the bar to fortify themselves with refreshment previous to entering upon their arduous and invidious duties. Under the influence of refreshment Mr. Nobbs, though still maintaining the superior fitness and propriety of Barrowfield, was so far reduced to an impartial and unbiased frame of mind as to be willing to talk over the relative merits of the candidates quietly.

Well they were both poor men; no one could deny that. No one did deny that. And they were both old men.

The opinion was unanimous that they were at least not young.

Parsley was old; so was Barrowfield; one might be a little older than the other; but that was not the point.

Wasn't it, though? Mr. Nobbs would like to know what was the point then.

Mr. Gubbins said, 'Infirmity.'

Mr. Nobbs would feel obliged by Mr. Gubbins explaining himself.

Mr. Gubbins explained. Both the objects were poor; both were old. In that respect there was six of one and half a dozen of the other; but the question was, which was the least capable, in consequence of infirmity, of doing something for himself—that was the point.

On reflection Mr. Nobbs was willing to admit

that that was the point. The electors generally concided in the same view.

But how was the relative infirmity of the two 'objects' to be tested?

Our efforts at accommodation had here come to a dead lock when we were suddenly startled by a great noise proceeding from the parlor.—Mr. Nobbs jumped over the bar, and rushed into the room, followed by the whole body of electors; and there we discovered Parsley and Barrowfield still sitting in their chairs, but engaged in mortal combat; prodding at each other with their walking sticks, like two knights in a tournament.

Mr. Gubbins made a rush at Parsley, and said, 'Ah! would you?' At the same moment Mr. Nobbs pounced upon Barrowfield and said, 'What are you up to?' accompanying the question with an admonitory slap.

An elector was struck with a brilliant idea.

'Don't part 'em; let 'em fight it out; and then we'll see which is the best man.'

A cheer was immediately given for the victorious Parsley. The question was settled now. Parsley had proved the best man.

Mr. Nobbs made an attempt to resist this conclusion; but this logical effort to show that Barrowfield was the best man because he had lost the fight was received with derision and scorn; and after a vain attempt to explain his views more clearly, Mr. Nobbs scratched his head, and appeared to be convinced that he was wrong.

The votes were taken in the presence of two churchwardens, and Parsley stood at the head of the poll. The declaration was made amid much applause; but after the excitement of the election had subsided a little, and the electors had had time for reflection over a quiet pipe in the bar parlor, it began to occur to them that the conclusion they had come to was not exactly the right one. Perceiving that this was a mental slip in the right direction, I endeavoured to state the problem in a mathematical manner, and to show that the conclusion was wrong because it had been drawn from false premises.

Mathematics and logic, however, did not achieve the triumph I expected; and the bearings of the question were not clearly perceived until Mr. Nobbs put it in this way:

'When two donkeys is matched to run a race the rule of the course is: The hindmost wins.'

When this law of the donkey race course had been elaborately expounded in its relation to the peculiar disqualifications of Parsley and Barrowfield, the fog which had hung about the intellectual faculties of the electors gradually cleared off; and eventually admitted the clear light of conviction that they had given their votes for the wrong man. It was Mr. Nobbs who remarked, by way of a toast, 'What's done can't be undone.'

To which Mr. Gubbins replied, by way of sentiment, 'Better luck next time.'

Meanwhile Parsley has been gathered to his fathers, and Barrowfield is a candidate without opposition for Gandler's Annuity.

A. H.

DIARY OF A SISTER OF CHARITY.

THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

By Charlotte Law.

CHAPTER I.

It was a dark cold winter's evening, so dark that not one ray of the moon or one glimmer of the stars could be seen; so cold, that those whom business or charity had called out were glad to hurry back again. Sister Rose and myself were walking quickly home, trying to reach the convent before the vesper-bell rang. Our way lay through the long, dark, back streets of the city of London. We had just left the house of an old patient, one whose life had been for some months gradually declining; a sudden and dangerous access of fever had detained us by her bedside long after our usual hour of return. We were trying to make up for our delay by hurrying home as quickly as possible. The darkness of the night prevented us from making great progress; the few dim lamps glimmering at long distances from each other did but little towards relieving the thick, dark, gloom. To add to our distress we were but very imperfectly acquainted with the way. We reached at length a long street; the houses were high, but narrow, and bore that peculiar poverty-stricken expression that speaks so eloquently of the misery within. No cheerful firelight streamed through the windows, no bright gas illuminated the two dreary-looking shops which were the only signs of life in the place. Two lamps, one at the top and one at the end of the street, only seemed to increase the darkness by showing how ineffectual their feeble rays were. Sister Rose, the young novice with me, was alarmed; well might she be,

for I doubt ever the wind had blown so freely upon her before. She was an only child, and the heiress of a large fortune. She had left home, friends, parents, and every luxury and comfort that wealth can bring, to follow His footsteps who left Heaven to die for us. I almost regretted that I had been obliged to keep her with me, for the cold wind and beating rain made her shiver and shudder.

'Courage, dear sister, we shall soon be at home.'

'Oh! Sister Magdalene, I am frightened, really frightened. I never saw a night so dark before.'

'Not frightened, dear sister; a Sister of Charity must not know fear; cold, darkness, heat, light, comfort or misery, hunger or thirst must all be alike to her.'

'I do not mean frightened,' said the little novice, with another shudder, 'but cold and bewildered; shall we be much longer?'

'Another half hour, perhaps, not more; a little courage, dear sister. I will tell you what thought consoles me always in these long dark walks: it is a very simple one, but it never fails to re-animate my faith and courage. Do you remember a beautiful sermon we had once about nuns, showing how in every action they ought to walk in the footsteps of our dear Lord, and showing us how to find in every place the trace of those sacred feet.'

'Yes, I remember it well; what then?' said the dear good little sister, forgetting in her eagerness, both cold and darkness.

'Why, whenever I am out on a dark night like this, I always try to fancy that our Lord has walked the same way just before me, and that each step I take is in his footsteps. I forget cold and darkness, and think only of Him.'

Just at this moment we passed a man and woman talking so earnestly they did not see us.—The woman was speaking in a low pitiful voice, and as I passed her I saw her put her hand on the man's arm as though to detain him; and she said, with a voice so full of entreaty and sorrowful eagerness, 'Oh! for the love of God.'

We walked on for two minutes; then out upon the night air there rang a wild and fearful cry, it was followed by a heavy blow, and the sound as though some one fell heavily to the ground.—Then a man rushed hastily past us, the same we had seen before. We stood rooted to the ground with fear and horror; Sister Rose clutched my arms. 'What shall we do, what can we do, dear sister?'

'We can only do one thing, and that is to return to see what is the matter, and what we can do.'

'Return through this darkness and rain? Oh! dear sister Magdalene; and yet I know we must, let us make haste then. After the first moment of fear had passed, she was brave and unshrinking. We hastened back. Just there, where we had passed her two minutes before standing pleading in God's holy name, the poor woman lay stretched lifeless upon the ground. A cry of terror, or even of pain, was an occurrence too common in that dreadful place to excite more than a passing surmise as to its cause; no one had ventured from the wretched tenements to inquire what was the matter; and there, with the dreanching rain beating heavily upon her, lay the poor unconscious creature. I hastened to raise her head, while Sister Rose went to ask for help at one of the two shops that were open. My very heart turned sick and faint at the sight of the gaping wound on her head and forehead, from which the blood flowed over a face pale and rigid as death. She had fallen upon a great stone, the sharp point of which had cut her most fearfully. I could not raise her from the ground, but I placed her head upon my knee, and tried with my handkerchief to cover the poor wounded face. I have passed many fearful minutes in my life, many that were fraught with danger and with terror; but none ever seemed to me more terrible than those I spent crouching in the darkness and rain with that fearful burden in my arms. Each moment seemed an hour.—At last help came. Sister Rose returned with two of the neighbors and a lantern. One of them knew her when he leant over her and looked in her face. 'Ah!' he said, 'it's her, poor thing, she lives there, just round the corner; I'll carry her home for you, sister.'

He was an Irishman and a Catholic, who knew us well by sight. His children, I learnt afterwards, attended our poor school. He lifted her in his strong arms, and carried her gently home. We followed him with the woman who had come to help us. It was but a short distance; but short as it was, the good neighbor, whose name was Mrs. Weston, managed to tell us a few particulars of our unfortunate patient.

'Nobody knew much about her; she was as poor as Job; but any how she was a lady born and bred they all knew by the looks and speech of her.'

'Was she married?' we asked.