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THE FATE OF FATHER SHEEHY. A TALE OF TIPPERARY EIGHTY YEARS AGO.

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CHAPTER II.—THE CHURCHYARD OF SHANDRAGHAN.

There was in those days a lone house standing close by the old churchyard of Shandraghan— and it may be there still for aught I know to the contrary— with its windows looking out into 'the lone place of tomb.' In Father Sheehy's time it was occupied by a farmer named Griffith, who was a kind-hearted, upright man, though a Protestant. The priest had at one time rendered him a signal service and Griffith was not the man to forget it. He had been known to say that Father Sheehy was a wronged and persecuted man, at the same time expressing a wish that he could do anything to assist him. His good dispositions were speedily put to the test, for, one evening, about an hour before sundown, as he sat alone by the fire smoking his pipe, who should come in but the priest himself, disguised as a mendicant, with a huge wallet slung over his shoulder.

'Good evening, Billy,' said the pretended beggar, as he doffed his tattered carboon, and flung his bag on the earthen floor. 'How is all with you?'

'Why, then, indeed, good man! you have the odds of me,' said Griffith, regarding the stranger with a quiet smile, 'but we're all well, thanks to you for asking.' Sit down an' take an air o' the fire this cold evenin'. Did you travel far the day?'

'I see you don't know me, Billy,' said the priest, sitting down by the fire, and spreading his hands to catch the genial warmth. 'Did you ever see this face before?' and he turned so, that the light fell full on his care-worn features.

Griffith started and drew back involuntarily. 'Why, as I'm a livin' man it's Father Sheehy himself.'

'Sure enough it is!' replied the priest with a mournful smile, 'you see I've got the bag (that is to say, turned beggar) at last.'

'But what in the world brings you here?' asked Griffith in great agitation; 'don't you know they're not far off that's seekin' you night and day. I see the sojers passin' not twenty minutes agone, and they may be back this way before long.'

'I know all that, Griffith, and it's the very reason why you see me here. I have so often baffled my pursuers, that they're getting to be too sharp for me; they don't leave a Catholic house unvisited, and they destroy all before them; so I must put an end to this state of things, for I cannot bear to see others suffer on my account. I will give myself up—but not to these vultures who are thirsting for my blood. If I can only conceal myself a few days, till I can write to Dublin and get back an answer, I will then disburden my friends of a heavy charge. You are a Protestant—they will not suspect you of harboring me—Griffith! will you afford me a shelter? I know you are incapable of being tempted by the reward offered for my apprehension, and you see I have full confidence in your kindly feelings towards me.'

'An' so you may, sir, so you may,' said Griffith rising from his seat and extending his hand to the priest, while the glow of honest satisfaction suffused his sun-browned cheek. 'You'll find, Father Sheehy, that you didn't lean on a rotten stick—and that William Griffith never forgets a good turn, if it was the Pope himself that did it. But where in the world can I hide you? I'd just as soon the children didn't get sight of you, if it could be helped.'

The fact was that the house did not afford a single hiding-place, and the out-houses were not to be relied on, unless the whole family were in the secret. They were then standing at a window, overlooking the churchyard, and the priest suddenly said:

'Is there not an old vault yonder in the graveyard, belonging to some family now extinct. I have heard people say so: Could I not hide there in the daytime—as I have only two or three days to provide for—and you might probably be able to admit me into the house at night, without your sons knowing anything of it?'

'The plan's a good one, sir,' said Griffith in a melancholy tone, 'but it would be an unnatural place to hide in. It's a fearful thing for the livin' to be shut up among the dead—an' I don't like it, at all, sir, if it could be helped.'

'Ay, that's the question—if it could be helped. But I see no other prospect for concealment, and as I have never willingly or knowingly injured living man, I have no reason to shrink from abiding a day or two in the dwelling of the dead. Better there than in the hands of Maude or Bagwell's emissaries.'

'Well! well! sir, I suppose we can't do better; and, then, I can let you in here every night, till you get something to eat an' drink, an' a few

hours' comfortable rest. But the boys will soon be in—sit down, sir, if you please, till I get you a bit to eat.'

Having made a hasty meal of oaten cake, eggs and milk, Father Sheehy rose. 'It is now almost dark,' said he, 'and I must retire to my hiding place for a few hours, till your family are gone to bed. Just show me the door of the vault,' he added with a forced smile, 'and leave me to introduce myself to its inmates. Come, come, Billy, why do you stare so, and shake your head? Don't you know very well that the mouldering dead are safer company for a doomed man like me than many of the living? ha! ha!'

His laugh was wild and unnatural, and it made Griffith shudder. He poked not another word, but beckoned the priest to follow, and led him out by the back-door, and round the end of the house into the graveyard. 'There's the door, sir,' he said, pointing to a low, narrow door, which, being a little lower than the surface of the ground, was reached by a few steps, green and mossy from long disuse. The door was old and crazy, and merely rested against the aperture. The priest descended the steps with a single bound, and lifting the worm-eaten door aside looked into the vault. But he could not see even its extent, for within it was dark as midnight. Even the brave bold heart in Father Sheehy's breast shrank from entering there at that hour. 'Go,' said he to Griffith, who still lingered, 'I can easily secrete myself now in the dim light from any one passing the road by keeping close to the wall. I need not intrude on the peaceful slumbers of the dead till the morning light compels me, owl-like, to seek the darkness. But go into the house, my worthy friend, for I hear some one coming down the road.'

In this strange retreat the persecuted priest remained some four or five days, sitting all the day on a large stone which he found in the old vault, reading his breviary, as well as he could, by the dim light which came through the wide chinks of the door, meditating the while on the lives of the first Christians in the Catacombs, and combating his natural aversion to the place, by the remembrance of the great St. Anthony, voluntarily retiring to the tombs, in order to baffle his spiritual enemies.

'And I, too,' he communed with himself, 'I, too, may profit by a brief sojourn in this dreary place. It will prepare me for the approaching time when I shall be called upon to enter the world of spirits. Let me, then, endeavor to profit by the occasion, and meditate on the eternal truths while only the dead are near—the silent, long-forgotten dead. Placed, as it were, between the two worlds—a link between death and life—let me consider how I stand before God—how I am prepared to account for my stewardship at the bar of Divine Justice.'

Engaged in such meditations as these he heeded not the flight of time, nor sighed for a return to the busy, bustling world. But the affairs of men—even his own—were moving on. He had written a letter to Mr. Secretary Waite, offering to give himself up, provided his trial might take place in the Court of King's Bench, in Dublin, and not in Clonmel, where the power of his enemies was supreme and despotic. An answer, accepting his proposal, came, addressed to his brother-in-law, who brought it himself to Griffith. That evening, Father Sheehy ventured to go home with Burke, took an affectionate leave of his weeping sister, and set out, accompanied by his brother-in-law, for the house of Mr. O'Callaghan, a magistrate of high standing and unblemished reputation. To him Father Sheehy surrendered himself, on condition that he was to be sent to Dublin; and Mr. O'Callaghan showed himself well worthy of the trust reposed in him, for he treated him with all the respect due to his priestly character and his long sufferings. He sent to Clogheen for a troop of horse to escort him in safety, fearing to trust the Orange constables by whom every magistrate was then surrounded.

When all was in readiness for Father Sheehy's departure, his brother-in-law came up to him, and said in a low voice, as he wrung his hand in parting:

'Your cousin, Martin O'Brien, is going up to town to-day. He will remain as near you as he possibly can, so as to render you any little service that may be in his power.' Then raising his voice, he added: 'May the Lord bless you, Father Nicholas, and deliver you from the hands of your enemies.'

'Amen!' responded the priest. 'Tell Catherine to be sure and pray for me—and you, too, Thomas! you, too, for it is written that "the prayer of the righteous availeth much." God be with you till I see you again, and if we do not meet here, we shall meet in heaven—at least I hope so.'

Father Sheehy was then placed on a horse between two of the dragoons, and having exchanged a kind farewell with Mr. O'Callaghan, he turned his horse, as did the soldiers, and the troop rode off. The priest pulled his hat over

his brow, and was speedily lost to surrounding objects, his thoughts being intent on the probable issue of his approaching trial. But his trust was in God, and however it might end, he resolved to regard the decision as coming from the Great Judge of all, the Disposer of events, and, therefore, to be received with entire submission. It was early in the morning when the prisoner and his guard left Mr. O'Callaghan's house, and at eight o'clock in the evening they stopped before the arched gateway of the Lower Castle Yard. The officer's summons was answered by a sentry from within, and very soon the heavy gates were thrown open, the troop rode into the yard, and Father Sheehy was duly delivered to the proper authorities, 'to be kept till called for.' As the doors of the prison closed, he thanked God that he was not in Clonmel jail, but at the same time he made an offering of himself to God, saying:

'O Lord! do with me what thou wilt! Thou knowest what is best for me!'

Leaving Father Sheehy immured in that prison where he was not destined to remain long, let us go back some months to bring forward an occurrence too little known, yet honorable alike to a public functionary of those days, and the people by whom his upright conduct was so well appreciated.

At an early period of these agrarian disturbances in the South, the government of the day had appointed a special commission to examine into the real state of the case, and to try the offenders (whether real or supposed) who had been taken into custody. Many of the most respectable Catholics had been tried, Father Sheehy amongst the number, and if the whole country was not plunged in mourning by the loss of many useful lives, it was not the fault of the zealous Orange magistrates, or their formidable phalanx of witnesses, for certainly they all did their duty and did it well—so well, in fact, that they overshot the mark, and made the conspiracy into which they had entered so broadly manifest that the whole proceedings fell to the ground. This was owing in great measure to the strict sense of justice and keen legal acumen of Sir Richard Acton, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, who had been sent down to preside on the occasion. The uprightness and impartiality of that excellent judge were indeed remarkable and worthy of all praise, at a time when partisanship ran so high that it was deemed a crime to show any sympathy for the sufferings of the people, and when every trial of a political character was expected to end in the conviction of the accused. But Sir Richard Acton was far above the gross prejudices of the time—when seated on the bench he divested himself of all party antipathies or predilections, and really appears to have given his decision on the actual merits of the case before him.

Many of the accused were, therefore, honorably acquitted, and they being, as may be supposed, the most respectable in character, and prominent in position of the Catholic community, the rejoicing was great all over the country.—The people were, in fact, transported with joy, for hitherto, in all such cases, prosecution was sure to end in conviction, and conviction in banishment or death.

It was morning, a mild, fair morning, and the sun had already ascended half-way towards his meridian height, when a carriage-and-four, containing Sir Richard Acton and a barrister who had accompanied him from town, drove out of Clonmel, and moved rapidly away on the Dublin road. About two miles from Clonmel the coachman suddenly pulled up and informed Sir Richard that there was a great crowd of people on the road before them.

'I don't know what they're about, my lord,' said the man, 'but they're a wild-looking set, and I don't half like their appearance. I'm afraid they're some of the Whiteboys, your lordship.'

'Well, suppose they be,' replied the Chief Justice, 'you need not look so terrified. From what I have seen of them, they are far from being the bloodthirsty savages they are represented. Drive on, Robin.'

The man obeyed for the moment, but had only gone a short way when he stopped again.

'Please your lordship, I'm afraid of my life to go on. Your lordship knows very well how they hate the law and all belonging to it, and it's short work they'll make of us all if they know who's in the carriage. As sure as your lordship's sitting there, they'll tear us limb from limb, and they'll fall on me first that's outside!'

Sir Richard and his companion laughed heartily at the doleful countenance of the coachman, yet though neither showed any symptoms of fear, the barrister deemed it prudent to see what the gathering meant.

Plowden relates this fact in his History of Ireland, and Dr. Madden mentions it on his authority in his Historical Introduction to the Lives and Times of the United Irishmen. Dr. Madden aptly styles Sir Richard Acton 'the Fletcher of his day.'

'With your permission, Sir Richard, I will walk on before the carriage and see what they are about. If they have any evil intention in waiting us here, it must be you who stand in the greatest danger, and it may be well for you to keep out of sight. It is true these Tipperary Whiteboys have no great love for the law or its administrators, and I like not this assemblage, evidently awaiting us.'

'Nay,' said the Chief Justice calmly, 'if their intention be hostile we cannot now escape them, and I will not consent that you should expose yourself even to possible danger on my account. Somehow, I cannot persuade myself that there is danger; but we shall soon know how matter stands. Drive on, Robin! drive on, I say—no one will harm you.'

'Oh Lord! Sir Richard, here they are;—they're coming towards us, as I'm a sinner. They'll kill us all, my lord—they will, they will; oh, then, wasn't I the unlucky man to undertake to drive a judge's carriage through this blood-thirsty Tipperary?'

He had scarcely spoken when the horses were stopped by the brawny arms of the tall mountaineers, and many loud voices were heard on either side of the carriage. 'Isn't it Judge Acton that's within?' Robin was scarcely able to keep his seat on hearing this supposed confirmation of his worst fears. He sat pale and trembling on the box, the whip and the reins fell from his nerveless grasp, and he could only murmur some inarticulate words in reply.

'Yes,' said the Chief Justice, putting his head out of the window, 'I am Sir Richard Acton—what is your business with me?'

'Business! oh, then, sorra business in the world wid your lordship's honor, only to thank you from our hearts out for what you did in the town atin. We daren't say what we wanted to say there, please your lordship, becase the sojers 'ud be set on to keep us quiet, and the magistrates, bad cess to them, 'ud be makin' it out treason, if we raised our voices at all, at all.—But we can't let you lave Tipperary without thankin' you, and lettin' you know that we'll never forget your goodness to us all.'

Sir Richard turned to his companion with a benevolent and, moreover, a gratified smile on his face.

'I told you so—I told you they were not likely to do us any harm. But I did not tell you of this overflowing gratitude, for I could not possibly have anticipated any such thing.'

Turning again to the peasants who stood hat in hand round the carriage windows: 'My very good friends, you take me somewhat by surprise. I have done nothing that entitles me to such an expression of gratitude. As a judge I have simply done my duty, favoring neither one side nor the other.'

'And that's jist what we want to thank you for. We want no favor, but only a fair trial. Justice, my lord, justice is all we ask, and that's what your lordship gave us. May the great God in Heaven have mercy on you when you stand before Him to be judged! And we'll pray for you every day we have to live, and we'll tackle our little ones to pray for you, too, becase you gave law and justice to the people.'

'Ay!' cried one taller than the rest, being, indeed, our acquaintance, Darby Mullin, 'if judges and magistrates were all like his lordship there needn't be any Whiteboys in Tipperary, or anywhere else for that matter.'

Here some women, crushing their way through the excited multitude, held up their little children, crying: 'There he is now! look at him, alanna? for maybe you'd never see the likes again barrin' you see himself—that's the judge that gave us fair play, astore?'

'May the blessing of God be about him and his, now and for evermore!'

'Fall back there all o' you!' roared a stentorian voice, and a space being cleared, the horses were in a twinkling taken from the carriage, and notwithstanding Sir Richard's earnest remonstrance, the brawny fellows laid hold of the shafts, and drew the vehicle along with amazing swiftness, while the hills around re-echoed with the shouts of the warm-hearted, grateful peasantry: 'Hurrah for the English judge that wasn't afraid or ashamed to do us justice!' 'Acton forever!'

Three cheers more, boys! just to show his lordship and the other gentlemen what a Tipperary cheer is! The three cheers which followed might well have made the Bagwells, and the Maudes, and the Hewitsons turn pale and tremble, while it brought the tears to the eyes of the upright judge.

When at length the carriage stopped, and the horses were once more put to, Sir Richard presented a bank-bill of considerable amount to the first who appeared at the window. But the man drew back almost indignantly.

'Take it, friend,' said the judge in a kindly tone, 'just to have you all drink my health this raw chilly mornin'!'

'No, no, your lordship, not a rap we'll take!

As for drinking your health, we'll do it, please God! at our own expense. Now you may dhrove on,' he said to Robin who had long ago recovered his self-possession. 'You were daunted at first, my lad! we could see that, but you know nothing at all about us, or you wouldn't.—You're not a Tip—that's plain!'

'Far-well, then?' said Sir Richard, taking off his hat and bowing courteously to the crowd, as the carriage rolled away. 'You have taught me to love and revere your virtues, and to make allowance for your faults.'

Another enthusiastic cheer rent the air—the crowd fell back on either side, and the carriage rolled through, the people gazing after it as long as it remained in sight, pouring out fervent blessings on its owner.

'I tell you,' said the Chief Justice, as, sinking back on his seat he drew a long breath, 'I tell you, my good sir, there is a fearful moral to be drawn from this scene, illustrative as it is of Irish character. Would that every judge in the land could have witnessed it!'

'Truly these poor people are riled and raged,' said the barrister, 'and their rulers see them only through a most distorted medium!'

'Well, Robin,' said Sir Richard to his coachman when they stopped to have the horses fed, 'what do you think of the Tips? Not quite so blood-thirsty, after all, eh?'

'Faith, your lordship, they're not half as bad as the bad name they've got. I'd be hanged if ever I stand by and hear their ill-spoken of again poor fellows! Why, to hear the gentlemen's servants in Clonmel, you'd think the Whiteboys were born devils!—might I make free to ask your lordship was there any Whiteboys among them people on the road?'

This question was put with an earnestness which brought a smile to the calm, grave face of the Chief Justice, and made his companion laugh heartily.

'Why, Robin,' said the lawyer, 'that is rather a puzzling question even for a judge!—how on earth do you suppose your master could distinguish a Whiteboy from all others?'

'Well, really, Robin, my good fellow!' said Sir Richard with his usual gentleness, 'I can scarcely answer your question, but I am inclined to think that by far the greater number of those men were Whiteboys.'

'And yet they drew our carriage,' said he of the whip, musingly, 'though we were sent down to try them. Well, I protest I don't know what to make of them for Whiteboys!'

'Just this, Robin,' said the barrister with a good-humored laugh, 'just this, that the devil himself is not so black as he's represented. But be off now and see to the horses—there's a good fellow, for we have a long road between us and dinner.'

'I say, Sir Richard,' asked the lawyer when they were again seated in the carriage after stretching their limbs by a short walk while the horses enjoyed their feed, 'what is your opinion of the priest, Sheehy? What manner of man do you take him to be?'

'Just the sort of man who cannot be tolerated by the petty tyrants who are determined to keep the people under their heel. He is a man of ardent temperament,—bold and reckless as regards his own safety, but keenly alive to the wants and sufferings of the people and their manifold wrongs. I take him to be a high-souled, warm-hearted man, but imprudent without, inasmuch as he takes no pains to conciliate those who have it in their power to do him and his much mischief. The consequence is that the magistrates both fear and hate him.'

A new subject was started of perhaps more immediate interest, and the Tipperary trials were dropped for the time.

(To be continued.)

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN SCOTLAND SINCE THE REFORMATION.

(From the Glasgow Free Press.)

Before the Reformation Scotland had two Archbishops, St. Andrews and Glasgow, and eleven Bishops, viz., Aberdeen, Brechin, Caithness, Dunblod, Dunblane, Moray, Ross, Orkney, Galloway, Argyle, and the Isles. We are not aware of any one of the regularly appointed and consecrated Scottish Bishops having joined the Reformation.

In Catholic times Scotland was divided into more than one thousand parishes; had about two hundred religious houses, such as abbeys, monasteries, and convents; had several cathedrals, thirty-three collegiate churches, besides the many churches scattered plentifully in every part of the country. Three universities were established in Scotland before the Reformation—Glasgow, Edinburgh, and St. Andrews; and just as the Reformation broke out a fourth university was about to be founded in Edinburgh, Bishop Reid of Orkney having bequeathed funds for the purpose. Besides the universities, there were grammar schools in all the principal towns, and more than forty hospitals in different parts of the Kingdom.

The above facts prove that the Catholic Church was in the most flourishing condition in Scotland previous to the Reformation—religion, charity, and learning illuminated the land; but, alas! a long dark night succeeded, and after the lapse of three