

AILEY MOORE

SALES OF THE TIMES SHOWING HOW EVILIONS, MURDER AND SUCH-LIKE FASTIMES ARE MANAGED AND JUSTICE ADMINISTERED IN IRELAND TOGETHER WITH MANY STRIBING INCIDENTS IN OTHER LANDS

BY RICHARD B. O'BRIEN, D. D., DEAN OF NEWCASTLE WEST

CHAPTER XVII

SHOWING HOW AILEY MOORE GOT ANOTHER "OFFER," AND DID NOT ACCEPT IT

Old Daddy Boran's house was on a gentle rising ground, and looked very cheerless and lonely. It was not a small house; on the contrary, it was very large, or at least very tall. Its high-pitched roof cut the air long and sharply; two became windows showed how the high-pitched roof had been economized, and useless "garrets" excluded; there were four windows in the front, tall and narrow like the house itself; and there was a very large hall door, thick enough for a jail, and painted some color which was neither black nor brown, but which was the color employed to paint the gates of penitentiaries. Before the door was a large semi-circular space covered with finely brown limestone, and from the semi-circular space to the public road there ran a way coated with the same material. The field in front of the establishment bore, at this period, a very plentiful crop of "late potatoes," and the remotest corner of the demense presented the agreeable view of a lime-kiln; and that the house was white-washed, and that there was a pump and stone-trough near the door, and you have a fair idea of the residence of Mr. Boran.

There were no houses near Mr. Boran's—all of them seemed to have moved off, as if Mr. Boran's house was a martinet, and the others were not ambitious of near-neighborhood. And Mr. Boran's house, looked too, as if it had the authority which would make a martinetship rather more than an admirably name. The hedges were so caped kept; the stone-work was capped by thick perpendicular slates, from which not a single slate noran ounce of mortar was absent; Mr. Boran's cows were the fattest and most sleek, and his sheep and lambs, and all his live stock, were of the best breeds and most "generous natures"; in fact, words are wanting in power to convey our idea of the perfection of all the appointments of Mr. Boran's farm—only it wanted trees; for Mr. Boran declared trees near the sea to be a nuisance, that kept away the sun and never could be sold.

The reader will understand why we suppose Mr. Boran's house to be a house "in authority," because it had the appearance of being the capital. We hold that to be the crowning line—the signature to a man's charter for local influence—to need nothing.

Ye patriots of the nineteenth century!—Ye patrons of progress and loyal lovers of an "emancipated humanity," behold! give the people purse, with something in them—give them commerce and land, and letters, and religion to teach the employment of wealth; and governments will be ruled by reason, because reason will hold the capital. Wrong will never yield to the hand which trembles with hunger; and right in these degenerate times will not associate with rags. We do not mean that right disdain weakness, but that strength will keep it in bondage, until weakness holds the purse-strings and becomes "respectable."

Do not cry "heresy against the power of ideas—insensibility to the force of strong will." There is no power in "ideas," when the "ideas" are not there, and people have a "strong will," until they have a "cash-box" to guard, and see a fair way to increase it. Give us, O ye philosophers, a few dollars in every man's pocket, and teach us the "Christian brother's course of education," and we shall have made the opinion of legislation before the Speaker puts on his wig and gown! Give us time—give us "industry," and "order," and the hope which springs from success, and we can spare you infinite speculation, diplomacy, and humbug.

On the left hand side of that passage, called by old Daddy Boran "the entry," and called by aspiring gentility "the hall," there was a room in Daddy Boran's house a room—a room like Daddy Boran, and like the house, and like the farm. It is sufficiently commodious, and very neat, though coldish. The boards are fairly sanded; the grate and fire-irons are so polished, that they seem never to have been used; a red deal table is in the middle of the floor—a broad strong table, with "falling leaves," fourteen red deal chairs, stationed like places for immovable things, are around the room; there is a "low-boy," a glass case of books, and various prints of varying merit are hanging on the wall. At this table, as sitting Mr. Boran, senior, on the right side, and Mr. Boran, junior, on the left.

As the reader already knows, one seems merely a reflection of the other—the wig and the stick excepted. We may also remind the reader of two most interesting qualities of young Nicholas Boran—he never looked any one in the face, when he could help it; and when he did look, it cost him so awful an effort to be civil, that he "grinned horrible and ghastly smiles," all the time he spoke.

So Ford has escaped to America, you say, eh? and Snapper's gone to the—?" remarked old Daddy Boran.

"Yes, I heard he escaped: an' Shanah Dherk said Snapper was turned out o' the drawin'-room be the lord," answered young Nick looking over toward the glass case.

"The Moores can't be well off now?" asked the old man, a little thoughtfully.

"They were allowed a trifle for the house," was the reply, "but the stock went for nothing."

"How much did they get out and out?"

"Four hundred."

"Ould Ford is in the jug?"

"He is." And young Nick grinned, and grinned, while his eyes shot from side to side, wondrously.

"Safe in this world!" exclaimed the old man. "You must marry her," he continued.

"Without nothing?" demanded young Nick.

"Pshaw! pshaw! pshaw!" was the polite, but half-indignant reply.

"Can't you do as you are desired?"

"Be course I can; but I suppose there's no threason in asking a question."

"Well, hould your tongue, now."

And old Mr. Boran commenced to flip the table in two or three gentle bony knuckles, because his mind was very much engaged, although the twinkle of his gray eyes showed that the engagement was resolute success, and not painful anxiety.

"You must marry her!" he again added, stopping suddenly, and looking his son in the face. Mr. Boran's wig did not stop though, by any means; on the contrary, it went up and down, like a boat pitching in the sea.

"Well, where is the use in saying it, a hundred times over?" very properly asked, the docile and gentle Nick, junior.

"I must," he most philosophically continued.

"Augh!" was the beautiful rejoinder.

Gerald Moore, as the reader is aware, was proved to be innocent; but innocence was no protection against ruin. His enemy was proved to be a villain; but Mr. Snapper's malignity lived longer than his character. We don't mean to aver that Mr. Snapper, J. P., continued, after his detection, to exercise his revengeful influence, but only that the effects of his villainy were allowed to take their course; and, therefore, when Gerald Moore came from prison, he found himself homeless and a beggar.

This is the comfort of justice under the reign of Hibernian landlordism.

The simple fact was, that the Moores, by a legal fiction and legal-ized robbery, were supposed to have deserted their home, and, besides losing the land which they had enriched by money and labor, they lost the mansion which had absorbed a thousand for every hundred which they received as "compensation."

Such are the "land benefits" of our "incomparable constitution!" May justice be added to the other qualities of our noble laws!

The little ready money which the family now possessed should be carefully economized, for it was the only support of a sick old man and an unprotected girl. Apparently, Gerald's father would not long need sympathy for his suffering—mind and body had bent under the stroke of injustice; but his many infirmities required more attention, and his imbecility rendered him quite insensible to expenditure. The poor man often called for indulgence which he never enjoyed in the days of his competency; and he would complain even at necessary delay in obtaining all he desired. But gentle Ailey was his nurse, and she loved with a real love, the bedside of infirmity; even had it been a stranger's she would have loved it, because she thought of His words—

"I was sick and you visited Me."

Something should be done, and soon, by Gerald Moore, and Gerald Moore was just the young man to see it should, and not to hesitate in the presence of duty. In the shadows of the night he came from the jail to his father's humble lodging, and he kissed the old man's brow; and he almost thanked God, through his tears, when he found that the sick man welcomed him "home,"—hoped he had a good day's hunting, and expressed some anxiety about the "stock."

The poor man added, "that he was not able to rise for a few days, because there was something the matter with his heart," but he said, "Ailey was a very kind and obedient boy, and he prayed that Gerald would not allow any one to take her from him." And then old Mr. Moore desired Gerald to kneel down beside the bed, because he thought it was "long since he had blessed him," and because there was "something on his heart," he said. Then the sick man was "sorry that Ailey was not there," and he besought Gerald to love Ailey, because she was "an angel, and he felt a kind of reverence when she sat by his head, so beautiful and so innocent." He was afraid she sometimes allowed her to sit too long there, for "poor Ailey had got pale of late," he said; and he was "quite sure," he added, "that Ailey grieved when Gerald remained out too long." Ailey stood during this conversation, on the opposite side of the bed, and looked at her father through her tears, dear child,—but Ailey bowed under the Cross,—for she remembered the Cross was the truest portion of innocence, and the surest. She always lived in the presence of God—and, as we said long ago, "God's presence measures the reality of things. How large things lessen, when viewed with God in our company, and how small things vanish!"

"Whoever wants to give true joy to the—?"

say, "and to give sorrow a death-blow, let him live in the presence of God, and love the children of suffering!"

Never was there a time, apparently, more propitious for wooing; the lady was poor and helpless, and the "gentleman" had more wealth than he could count. Moreover, he came with sweet Moorfield in his hand, and opened the door of "home" to a falling father. "He cannot be refused," thought the old gentleman, Mr. Nick Boran, senior.

Why on earth he had been so beleaguered by his father, and so wantonly taken from a "hoth" of things at home, to go seek a wife who had no money, was, on this occasion, the puzzle of Mr. Nick Boran, junior.

Besides, Mr. Nick, junior, never met Ailey Moore that he did not wish himself a thousand miles away. He would go the opposite side of the road to avoid meeting her. She was not like any of the people he had known, and "she spoke so," and "glided along so," and "one felt ashamed so," near her, were the comfortable reflections of the son and heir of the old miser.

At all events, both of them, father and son, ascended a huge yellow jig, something like a travelling tub, and each looking in a different direction, they commenced their journey to Clonmel, where they knew the family still resided.

Very little conversation took place between the Borans in their journey to town, and as the way was sufficiently long, there was plenty of time for meditation. In the earlier part of the afternoon, old Daddy Boran's reflections were frequently quickened by the wayside commentaries of the younger portion of the population.

Whether he would "sell his wig," and whether his "gold was in good health," were interrogations; while a few of the bolder and older wanted to know whether he was going to sell his wig, or to "back office," and in the banker's chest, and said, as substantially as Horace's miser, "Let the ragamuffins shout—I have the rhino!" And let it be said to his credit, that on this day he gave a beggarman fourpence "for luck," he said, because, though Daddy was no niggard in giving food, he rarely gave money, and even the food was given with so bad a grace, that poverty felt in its soul more than the body was relieved by his benevolence.

Why is this? God knows the poor are our brothers and sisters, are they not? They suffer enough in being refused, or in being obliged to beg; why should we add biting words and bitter bearing to our refusal? or why destroy our little aims by them? Ah! how happy a smile or a kind word would often make an old breaking-down spirit, that carries its bag to the open grave! Let us make up our minds to be gentle to the poor—God's poor!

"That hotel—at Clonmel—I know well!" was a favorite piece of rhyme with travellers who looked for a blazing fire of a cold winter's evening, or hot buns and a strong tea, after a night outside or inside "the Dublin mail coach!"

Daddy Nick could say the same, though he never had been guilty of the imprudence of sitting outside or inside the mail coach, and never had travelled very much further than he did on the day of these presents; for Daddy Nick always saw his "room," and he felt the sheets (by no means a foolish thing) to ascertain if they were damp; and he saw his horses fed, "the master's eye" having a most "fettering" effect on horse-flesh, as he declared; and he saw and laid by; and he went to "speak particularly" about the "time of breakfast," and what he would "have for dinner," and so forth. So that he knew "the hotel very well."

The candles were lighting when he came; and having entered, he found in the coffee-room a gentleman with green spectacles reading the newspaper. The face of the stranger was turned from him, but his hair was gray, and Mr. Boran thought he should know the look of him, when turning round the gentleman at once revealed Father Mick Quinlivan.

An old clergyman started up at once. Some of the old light in his eyes, and the hand stretched forth in love. Why don't the world give way a little more to the heart?

"Mick! Nick!—old friend!" cried Father Mick; "and your son, too, I declare!—well, well! I am glad to see you."

"You're here too, Father Mick," answered old Boran, giving his hand as warmly as old Boran could. "Come here, you," Mr. Boran, senior, said, addressing his son. "Why don't you come and speak to the priest, you 'kealon,' you?"

"You'll both eat a bit with me?" said Father Mick.

"Throth, 'tisn't the first time," answered the old man, who saw a saving in the matter.

"We'll have Gerald Moore—an old friend."

"Gerald Moore?"

"Yes."

"Fortune is in my favor, anyhow," answered the old gentleman. "Come, you wished to see him?"

"Come, in throth, all the way to see him."

"You're just in 'the nick of time,' the family are going by easy stages to Limerick to-morrow; going for the present to a sister of the old man—a widow pretty well to do."

"An' has the sister children?"

"No."

"Then I suppose she'll leave her share to Ailey?"

"No."

"The deepest truth only blooms out of the deepest love.—Heine.

FATHER MICK LOOKED AT THE OLD MISER, FOR FATHER MICK SAW SOMETHING IN THE QUESTION.

"Oh, her money is not much, but 'his steady, and she can give Ailey a home."

"Ailey can have a home, if she please," said the miser—"She—"

Mr. Nick Boran, senior, was interrupted by the arrival of Gerald, who just entered the room. He was grave as usual, and held the evening paper in his hand. He was startled by the presence of old Mr. Boran and his son; for so many strange events had recently occurred, that every strange face looked like an indication of a new trial. However, he welcomed old Mr. Boran cordially, and shook hands with young Mr. Boran, and asked and answered all the questions which such an occasion is sure to produce. Although a few sentences sufficed to show the object of Mr. Boran's visit to town, Gerald did not openly advert to it.

Gerald opened the newspaper.

"Justice has seized upon wrong," he said, addressing Father Quinlivan.

"How?"

"Snapper has been discovered in something which gravely compromises him."

"Eh?" cried the Borans together.

"He has been seized in Dublin, and is in prison."

"Who told you?" cried Father Quinlivan.

"This here," said Gerald, pointing to the newspaper.

"Who accuses him?" continued Father Mick.

"John Murtagh."

"Shaun a Dherk!" cried all, with one voice.

"And Ford has made full confession," Gerald continued.

"Eternal praise to the God of justice!" cried the priest. Gerald took the old man's hand.

"Father," said Gerald, "you told me of the day I went to jail, that it was among the arrangements of Eternal love and justice. You were right!"

The priest flung his arms around Gerald and embraced him.

"Tisn't our country at all, agra! 'tis bad world—we are going home."

Quando fiet illud quod tam sitio Ut, te revelata cernens facie, Visu sim beatus tue glorie!

"When will my heart-wish be given, That, beholding thy beauty unveiled, I may shine mid thy glory in Heaven!"

There, at all events, will be found even-handed justice agra, won't it?"

"I have more news," continued Gerald: "we have letters from the Tyrrels."

"The young lady that gave Ailey her Madonna?"

"And her brother."

"Oh, yes, of course; Frank, they called him."

"And the strange handsome gentleman that shook hands with us in the police-office—"

"Well?"

"Ah! Now, Gerald—is it so, eh?" cried Father Mick.

"He has brought them all the news; they even know that you got back your library."

THREE BLESSINGS

"May God's blessing attend you, and when your blessing comes, may you not pass out of this world without the assistance of your clergy."

It was the first time Hugh L'Estrange had come in contact with anything Catholic. He laughed to himself—the idea of either death or clergy seemed incongruous in connection with his vigorous life. But he did not forget the blessing that the old Irish woman at the corner of a Liverpool street had bestowed upon him. A gust of wind had sent her battered bonnet flying, and before her old limbs were set in motion she stepped out into the road and recovered the truant headgear. Re-turning it, with something in addition to replace the mud-stained trimmings, he noted anew her patient, poverty-worn face. In return she again called the blessing of heaven upon him.

On Sunday when he sat decorously in his pew while the clergyman of his parish read the prayers in a monotonous voice, the Irish woman's words recurred to his mind. He repressed a smile at the thought of how much he would prefer Mr. Drake's absence to his assistance, even when death should come to him.

For an instant, too, the thought flashed across his mind that a religion of the clergy were a vital part might hold something worth having for the poor and the dying.

At this juncture Mr. Drake's high-pitched call to prayer brought him back to the duty of the moment and he rose to his feet with his neighbors.

Though he did not know it the blessing of God was attending Hugh L'Estrange. For after this, often in contact with things Catholic; possibly it was only some reference in a society paper, or the name of a church which he had never forgotten.

Perhaps the second direct contact that Hugh L'Estrange became aware of was on day at a meeting of the board of charities. The case of a Catholic boy was brought forward on account of some oversight in his registration on the workhouse books. He was to be brought up nominally in the Church of England; practically, according to the views of those with whom he was to be boarded out.

The child, a sturdy young Lancastrian of eight or nine years, was standing near Mr. L'Estrange while a heated discussion went on between the other guardians. Touching the boy on the shoulder, Mr. L'Estrange spoke to him in an undertone.

"What do you think you are yourself, eh?" he asked with a movement of the head to show that he referred to the theme of his guardians' conversation.

The boy looked at him squarely. Without hesitation he answered, "I am a Catholic."

Then he added, "If you weren't a Catholic what would you be?"

A Baptist, a Methodist and a Congregational home were being discussed in turn.

"If I weren't an," replied the boy sturdily, "I'd be one."

"By Jove, so you shall!" exclaimed L'Estrange, throwing himself into the discussion in which heretofore he had taken no part. So conscientiously did he press his point declaring his intention of calling in legal opinion if necessary to support his claim, that before the meeting rose the boy was inscribed a Catholic on the books and handed over to the manager of Mr. L'Estrange's home.

Mr. L'Estrange noticed the boy pointing him out to the priest, who was losing no time in freeing him from the workhouse.

"Young George here tells me what you have done for him, sir," said the priest, as Mr. L'Estrange passed him. "God will reward you for this."

That was the second Catholic blessing he received.

The third blessing came through no act of his own. He was only a spectator of a scene, and that, it seemed, by chance. Afterwards he understood that God's blessing was attending him.

The instinct of Isaac Walton was strong within him, and the yearly holiday was always spent where fishing might be had. It was only natural therefore that the west of Ireland should attract him. There, late in the autumn season, he found himself in a primitive riverside inn. During his stay the equinoctial gales changed the Atlantic into a gray, cruel sea, (fill rising in mountains of water and foam it seemed like a huge wall of roaring liquid rushing against the sky.)

A pier to make safe harborage for the boats coming in for the islands had been built in the congested districts, but on this night the little gray wall was one mass of seething whiteness which seemed to offer neither shelter nor safety to any craft. Yet here it was Hugh L'Estrange, watching the storm with Barble Joyce, his boatman on the lakes, his self-constituted guide along the river, saw, hardly believing his own sight, a small craft cresting huge billows for an instant, then falling away out of sight. It reappeared at intervals, however. Each time it took more certain shape in the fitful light of the fleeting moon.

"A boat! God help them this night!" cried Barble, steadying himself against the pier, and straining his eyes to see when the black oblong shadow rose again on the waves.

"Never can they live at the pier end there till the priest gets out to join them."

"The priest!" repeated the Englishman, thinking the wind had mis-carried his companion's meaning.

"Aye, the priest," returned Barble. "What else would bring ten men in their senses over from Irishberg this night?"

He turned quickly and disappeared in the darkness, and L'Estrange guessed that he had gone to where the parochial house stood in some pretense at shelter. He had learned long ago that Catholics wish for the presence of the priest to help a passing soul into eternity. But he never realized before how universally, even in the face of almost unsurmountable difficulties, that presence was sought.

It seemed madness even to try to reach the boat that tossed just beyond the pier, much less to board her and turn again into the storm. Yet sooner than he would have thought possible, Barble, with half a dozen others, were back at the pier head again, and from the lanterns some of them held he could see a tall figure in black tarpaulin and close fitting sou'-wester standing while a rope was firmly fastened round it. L'Estrange knew intuitively it was the priest. A momentary lull enabled the little band to make their way to where the boat tossed and strained against the determined efforts of the rowers to keep her from destruction.

Coming nearer, they threw out a line. The priest took it, winding it around his body. Then he dropped down as the boat waited for him. He loosened the rope afterward and the men on the pier would have hauled it in, only there seemed some hitch or delay. Then they saw that one of the boat's crew was coming ashore in place of the priest. As he reached the pier L'Estrange, by some act of Providence being nearest the boat, heard a groan of pain, and the hands of the sailor as he grasped them were wet and warm with blood. L'Estrange understood then that this man, hurt by some accident, was of no use in the boat, and that they were waiting because they needed another rower.

Barble the next man to L'Estrange, was the father of a family; so, too, was the next beyond. L'Estrange was not a good seaman, but he was as strong a rower. Further, he had neither wife nor child to leave.

There was hardly time even for this to shape itself in his brain. He scarcely knew that he had decided to go, when he felt the rope in his hands, saw for an instant the tossing depths beneath him. Then strong arms caught and held him, and he was in the boat.

The priest facing him was young, boyish, almost too young, too boyish, he had carelessly thought, to be the pastor of strong men's souls. But his face was white, determined, and his jaw was set. In his eyes was a strange light—excitement, perhaps, but certainly not fear; young as he was, this was not the first midnight struggle he had had with the sea, but to night as before he carried his passport of safety on his heart.

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