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AN ACT OF DISOBEDIENCE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

A NARRATIVE OF REAL LIFE.

CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

After breakfast, at the suggestion of Father Edward, I resolved on visiting the schools. On our way thither, he spoke with enthusiasm of the great good to be accomplished in these summaries of literature and religion—of the singular progress the children had made, both in secular and sacred knowledge—lauded the qualifications and devoted industry of the teachers, and above all the happy art that both the master and mistress possessed of softening down the manners, and imbuing the hearts of their pupils with the great principle of true charity, the love both of God and man. Father Edward discussed the subject of education and the training of the young mind, as if his whole life had been devoted to the study of practical instruction. On our arrival in the boy's department, I found it was anything but a 'noisy mansion'; it appeared rather a temple dedicated to order and decorum, where the young worshippers, with all the happiness of sinless souls sparkling in their cheerful countenances, made every thought an aspiration, every act a prayer, their rule being ready obedience, their aim in all things the glory of God. This, my first impression, was drawn from a general though cursory view of the quiet industry of about one hundred boys. During an examination of the arrangements of the school and the acquirements the pupils, my conviction was strengthened, and as my Reverend cousin had led in the display, I began to discover more clearly the general character of a young man whose habits appeared either naturally taciturn or deeply reflective. The latter was the case. Familiar with similar educational establishments in my adopted country, I was not ignorant of the general routine of teaching, nor was I incompetent to draw either a parallel or a contrast. In every establishment in the United States, from the merest juvenile seminary up to the doings in Congress, the national 'go-ahead' spirit, with all its inseparable bustle, is found to prevail. I had often deplored the fact, because I perceived that the system engenders selfishness, worldly-mindedness, mammon-worship, and that daring self-reliance which repudiates all humility, and spurns the idea of dependence even upon Divine Providence. How often have I shuddered at the sneer of the successful speculator, when some poor trusting Christian in the depth of distress would give expression to his reliance on the goodness of God, bursting in with his coarse observation: 'Well, my friend, I guess you are out there. Put your own shoulder to the wheel. God helps them that helps themselves; that's the genuine go-head philosophy after all; ain't it, I say?' But in this humble rural nursery of thought, everything was the very contrary. A sound and extensive secular education was given, based upon the principles and practice of true religion. The intellect was cultivated with care and assiduity, but the great end and aim was to imbue the young heart with love of virtue, and implant those holy springs of action that would enable the future man to regulate his passions, and subdue that surging will which unceasingly tends to counteract the working of God's free grace.

After about an hour spent in the examination of the pupils, Father Edward had to attend to a sick call, and I was left to the attentions of the schoolmaster. He was a man in the middle stage of life, a close observer, acute, active and intelligent; he was, too, an enthusiast in his profession. On paying my sincere compliments upon the admirable order of his school, and the general attainments of his pupils, he modestly replied: 'All that you admire, sir, or that is worthy of being admired, is entirely attributable to Father Edward. I know we stand much higher, in many respects, than the generality of country schools, but neither I nor any mere layman could have raised it to its present position, without his or some similar aid; indeed, I need not qualify my words, I may truly say, without his own aid.—The entire congregation, sir, are as much under his control as these children are now under mine. I speak thus freely because, from his usually reserved manner, I am aware you as yet know little of his real value.'

an elevation of mind, and a solid mode of thinking to the children, which would in vain be sought for elsewhere.'

'The children, however, must be naturally docile, else no man could gain such wonderful ascendancy over them.'

'All children that have been properly trained are docile. But that training never originates in a school; it must be commenced on a mother's breast, and cherished at the father's knee; and here is the spring of Father Edward's influence, and my success in the school; as I said before, the parents are as much under his control as the children, not only with regard to education, but to every other matter. His high tone is never heard, but his eye sends forth his meaning with decision. He sees everything, directs the farming affairs of all his parishioners, insists upon sobriety, order, regularity, and industry, and his flock receives his instructions with the confident docility of infants. He is a man of unceasing labor and few words; but these words, floating on honored accents, are never disregarded, are ever obeyed. The spirit that directs the parents is naturally communicated and instilled by them into the minds of their children, and hence that politeness and self-denial which prevail in my little community: some might be found to laugh at, or even ridicule the idea of self-denial in children, but here it is practised with a ready kindness and holy gaiety, not less graceful or acceptable, perhaps, than was the supernatural mortification of the Saints.'

'It is a happy state, my friend, and few societies, I fear, can boast such blessings; but it is inconceivable to me how Father Edward finds time for the discharge of such numerous duties; an extraordinary aid must support him.'

'To his ardent devotion to Our Blessed Lady, I attribute all the grace and power he has received, and power like that which has been confided to him I have never known in priest, whether old or young.'

'As his cousin, I naturally feel delighted at the account you give of your indefatigable young priest, but I think, however wise and deeply read in the workings of the youthful or the aged heart he may be, there is great merit still due to him who carries the plans into such admirable operation as is here displayed. Now permit me to say that Father Edward attributes to you a large amount of praise on many grounds, but I will only name one, which is, the manner in which you govern this little kingdom of yours.'

found an inestimable treasure in his teachers.—Not aware of the amount of their salaries, I said that I trusted Father O'Donovan was a liberal paymaster; he looked at me, as I thought, somewhat inquiringly, and then said:

'Oh, yes, sir, our salaries are quite sufficient. Father O'Donovan well understood how to deny himself the gratification or even the necessities of life, but he never could learn the modern science of screwing the poor man, or of defrauding the laborer of his wages. He had many trials in early life and in middle age, but God has shed a peaceful light upon his declining years.'

'Yes, my friend, the God of mercy never fails to reward His faithful servants, whether the reward comes in time or in eternity! And you and your fellow-laborer shall not go unrewarded. I will only add—you shall never eat the bread of dependence. But here is Father Edward, and for the present I take my leave.'

In company with my cousin I inspected the female department, and found even more than the report of the school-master had prepared me to expect. Hereafter I may give you a detailed account of this model school, the only one indeed that I have ever seen worthy of the name. During a couple of weeks my time was spent in rambling about my early haunts. Some of my boyish acquaintances still remained, but I found them quite as much changed as they found me. I enjoyed singular satisfaction in examining the farming operations, and in noting the agricultural skill and the general intelligence possessed by all. A rivalry for well-doing seemed to animate every breast, and the only end aimed at was the discharge of duty, perhaps I might add the praise of their young priest, to whom was attributed every good they enjoyed, whether spiritual or temporal. I was fascinated with the equally gay and simple manners of this rural population, whose happy state furnished me with subjects for deep meditation. One among which was, the striking difference between the effects of lavish bounty, and prudent, working, active benevolence; here was a community that some years before, and with very few exceptions, was as remarkable for their general wants as they were now for the enjoyment of comparative comfort. And whence sprung this pleasant change? Simply from the addition of some limited funds judiciously applied through the means of their own exertions, to their physical, moral, and religious improvement! I could not help seeing that similar treatment would make every locality in poor Ireland as prosperous as the one under our notice. Nor could I help throwing my mind back upon the happy and contented state of England during the ages of faith, when similar agencies, and unlimited means, kept want and its concomitant miseries literally unknown in that proud and glorious nation. See the contrast now. A licentious tyrant robbed the Church and the poor of their patronage, and conferred it upon his parasites and other debauched instruments of his injustice. And now that same England pays the penalty of his crimes. The collection of nine millions a year of poor rates enables the merest dolt to judge of the benefits conferred on posterity by the Reformers of the sixteenth century.'

CHAPTER IV.

Letters from some of my agents, and other correspondents, summoned me to Dublin on business of some importance. I was enabled to persuade Father O'Donovan, notwithstanding his infirmities, to accompany me to that once gay and still beautiful capital. We travelled by a private conveyance, and were enabled to proceed by such easy stages, as suited the ease and taste of my aged companion. Greshams was always, and with justice, a considerable house; we, therefore, on our arrival, took our abode in that hotel. For the first few days we remained rather private, and as I was personally unknown, and Father O'Donovan almost forgotten, we had the satisfaction of being permitted, without interruption, to visit every place of note which could attract our attention.

Among the various scenes of interest, none had such attraction for me as the Catholic Association; I longed to see the great leader of his country, to listen to the persuasive accents of the unrivalled champion of the Church. In the first character his actions commanded my love; in the second, that deep veneration which we would yield to the commissioned agent of Heaven.—Nor was my curiosity less intense with regard to the original eloquence of Shiel. We, therefore, went, as we believed, enog, to the Corn Exchange, but on our entrance, the eagle eye of O'Connell, that saw every thing, and knew every one to whom he had ever been introduced, fastened upon Father O'Donovan, and immediately getting up from his chair, he said, in that respectful manner which he ever observed towards clergy-men, and in his own deep-toned mellow accents: 'Make way there, gentlemen for the Rev. Father O'Donovan, the aged and patient rector of the far West, who comes to bless'

our efforts, and grace us with his honored presence.'

'Oh! with what ready alacrity was that voice obeyed! With what respect and reverence was a passage cleared, and accommodation found for the old gentleman and his friend on the right and left of O'Connell. Before we were seated, he said, in his own bland and fascinating manner,—'Father O'Donovan, do honor me by introducing me to your friend!'

'Pardon me, my dear sir, if I seem to evade your wish; at present I am not at liberty to say more than a Catholic gentleman from America!'

O'Connell shook my hand with cordiality, and said: 'Sufficient, Reverend sir; whether as his native or adopted country, he will find that the word America is a passport to every Irish heart. We owe much to that fine land; yes, to every State in the Union; but our best love is still with our own sympathizing Catholic Maryland—Maryland, that first raised the holy standard of universal freedom. Yes, we owe much to America; and may we not be proud of the fame of our countrymen, the Carrolls of former time, and the Cahills of the present day?'

I felt persuaded that he had discovered me.—During these few words, he gave me an occasional glance, in order, as I thought, to ascertain what effect his allusions might have upon my feelings. His conduct brought to my mind the superhuman skill attributed to him, in penetrating the most secret thoughts of an unwilling witness. I believe I had presence of mind sufficient to baffle him, and Father O'Donovan, with great tact, received his observations as applied generally, and without any particular reference. This little fact alone would have convinced me that the fate of Ireland was safe, and must ultimately be triumphant in his hands.

The routine of business having been concluded, the letters read, and 'the rent' accounts settled, the advocate of the Church's rights, and the impassioned and terrible denouncer of his country's wrongs, stood up to make the speech of the day; and such a display as that was to me! Words may not convey an adequate idea, either of its excellence, or of the effect it produced on his audience. As regarded myself, I shall only say that his singular eloquence kindled a flame in my heart, that still, even amidst the frost of age, burns brightly. That speech greatly decided my after fate. Shiel followed, and I was disappointed. True, he was admirable—he evidently put forth all his powers; his diction was pure, classic, beautiful; his imagination exuberant; his figures correct and striking; his passion strong and unaffected. But yet, I felt that I was merely listening to a set-oration. It struck me that his eloquence resembled the fitful flash, and the scathing power of the lightning that glared, and was forgotten in the same moment, while O'Connell's was the awful, deep-toned thunder, leaping from peak to peak, and rolling from summit to summit in the vast Alleghany range, which I have heard in mute terror, and which can never be forgotten.

When the business was concluded, and during the time the vast assembly was dispersing, we were left alone; after some trifling conversation O'Connell said, with a smile that I shall never forget:

'Father O'Donovan, you and your friend will go home with me for dinner. I ask the favor as a charity; you know I am a social animal, and if you refuse, I shall be condemned to what I most on earth dislike, a solitary meal, for there is not an individual of my family in Dublin at present. If, as I judge, you desire privacy, you will attain your object fully at my humble board; not a soul will be present but ourselves there.'

'What say you, my son?' said Father O'Donovan.

'That I am proud of the honor, and will gladly avail myself of it,' was my ready reply.

'Ah, I was right,' said O'Connell; 'you are Irish—I knew you were Irish—the first flash of your eye told me so—I never mistake my countrymen. Pray now, said he, with a rich brogue, and a leer that could not be withstood, 'in your wandering through America, did you ever happen to meet with one Edward Cahill, a petty, peddling bit of a merchant, that doesn't care a fig for his country, and wouldn't give a haireen for the support of religion, or for the honor and glory of God? The fellow, I'm told, lives in B—?'

I saw there was no use in further concealment; so, making a virtue of necessity, I gaily answered him in his own style:

'In truth I know the chap right well; yes, every in, and out about him, and between you and me, I'm satisfied he's no better nor he should be!'

'Nabochib! For the merchant's sake will you let me kiss your cheek. And in a moment, I was pressed to the broad chest, and locked in the brawny arms of the liberator of his country, and the champion of his'

creed. His coach was in waiting; we all entered, and in a few minutes we stopped at 'the green door,' in Merion square. With such a host it need not be said that we spent a delightful evening. I unfolded to him some of my future plans, and had the benefit of his reliable advice. During my stay in Dublin, I frequently enjoyed his society and partook of his hospitality without at all being exposed to public notice.—I rejoiced in my good luck, and had prepared for quitting the city; but on the morning previous to that appointed for my departure, the Evening Post was put into my hand by Father O'Donovan, and to my chagrin and surprise, I found the following paragraph:

'In the list of presentations yesterday at the Castle, we were proud to perceive the name of our honored countryman, Edward Cahill, Esq., the Millionaire American Merchant, whose chief establishment is in the city of B—.'

'After the levee, we understand, he was a guest, by special invitation, at the Vice-regal Lodge, Phoenix Park, where he was received and treated with marked distinction, both by his Excellency and the Marchioness. Before her departure from her own country, Mr. Cahill lived on intimate terms with her respected family, and on his presentation at the levee, she was rejoiced to renew her acquaintance, and confer all the honor and respect which her well-merited and lofty station enabled her to bestow.'

We have been informed that his chief object in coming to Ireland was to visit his extensive estates in Co—, county R—, late the property of Lord F—. They have been in his possession more than seven years, though not a man on this side the Atlantic could name the real proprietor, save his solicitor, Father O'Donovan, the aged Rector, and Father Edward Cahill, the Curate, and chief instrument in carrying out the benevolent views of the respected gentleman. All the world knows his generous and lofty character. Perhaps the wealthiest merchant in the United States—certainly the most fortunate man who ever left Ireland, his bounty has kept pace with his good fortune. The kind friend and benefactor of his countrymen in America, it is a literal fact that not one of them ever sought advice or assistance from him in vain;—but he did not confine his bounties to those merely who appealed to his benevolence. The district which boasts the honor of his birthplace has also become the scene of his munificence. His funds built the chapel, the parochial house, and the noble schools which stand upon his property, and are supported by his gratuity; besides, he has settled a liberal endowment on the parish priest, which secures a comfortable independence for the ecclesiastic who may fill that sacred office in C—. More still—it is believed, as yet, he has never received a farthing of rent since he became proprietor of the estates, but has spent the nett proceeds in elevating, not grinding the tenantry and laboring classes. By this means, we are creditably informed, he has converted a wretchedly poor population (which they certainly were when he became proprietor) into a happy, contented, and comfortable body of farmers and cottiers, resembling what is called the yeomanry classes in England. We will only further say, that Ireland wants proprietors like him. Many pleasant on this are whispered relative to his future views and projects, but we are not, at present, authorized to attempt a development even as a conjecture. By the way, he visited the Association, dined with O'Connell, with whom he left a cheque for £100 for the Catholic rent, and has since had several private interviews with the learned gentleman. This bodes well.'

I laid down the paper in a state of grief and mortification. I found my wishes frustrated, and saw that my plans, by this public announcement, must necessarily be precipitated, if not marred. In vexation of spirit, if not with some little tinge of petulance, I said to Father O'Donovan.—'Surely, my dear sir, you could not willingly have contributed any information that would warrant the editor of the Evening Post to draw public attention to my private affairs as he has done, and in a manner so painful to my feelings, and perhaps to the great obstruction of the plans which you know I have in view?'

'I acknowledge, my son, that at home I did blub a little; of that you are already aware; but here I have been perfectly silent on every topic that regarded you or your affairs. Yes, I have been quite a prudent, silent old gentleman.'

'Who, then, could have given publicity to secrets so little known, and, as I demand, so well guarded? Would O'Connell? Could my solicitor?'

'If they didn't, my dear, you have only another pair of genits to fall back upon; for we may safely clear Father Edward.'

'Yes, we may safely clear Father Edward; but who, pray, are the other gentlemen you allude to?'