THE NOBILITY OF PRAYER.*

POLYEUCTES.

If death be noble in a sovereign's cause,
What must his be who suffers for his God?

PAULINA.

What God is that thou speakest of?

POLYEUCTES.

Ah! Paulina,
He hears thy every word.—Tis not a God,
Deaf and insensible and impotent,
Of marble, or of wood, or of shining gold,
I mean the Christian's God—my God and thine,
Than whom nor earth nor heaven confess another.

PAULINA.

Be then content within thy heart's recess
To adore in silence.

POLYEUCTES.

Why not tell me rather
To be at once Idolator and Christian?

PAULINA.

Feign but a moment, till Severus' absence,
And give my father's mercy scope to act.

POLYEUCTES.

My Heavenly Father's mercy—ah! how far
To be preferred! Ha my unconscious steps
From lurking danger guides. His hand sustains,
And when but entering on my new career,
His grace decrees the crown of victory;
My bark just launched he safely wafts to port,
And me, from Baptism's rites to heaven conveys.
Oh, that thou knewest the vanity of life,
And all the bliss that after death awaits us!
God of all mercy, Thou hast given to her
Too many virtues, and too high perfections,
Which claim her for a Christian, that I swore grievous
To think her destined to remain estranged
From thee and from thy love, to live the slave,
The unhappy slave, of thine arch-enemy,
And die, as born, beneath his odious yoke!

PAULINA.

What wish escaped thy too presumptuous tongue!

POLYEUCTES.

One whose fulfilment gladly would I purchase
With every purple drop that fills these veins.

PAULINA.

Soother shall—

POLYEUCTES.

Hold, Paulina; 'tis in vain
To struggle 'gainst conviction. Unawares
The God of Christians melts the obdurate heart;
The happy moment, though not yet arrived,
Will come, but when, is not to me revealed.

—Translated from the French by Corneille.

* From "Gems from Foreign Catholic Poets," collected by James J. Treacy, Editor of "Catholic Flowers from Protestant Gardens", "Tributes of Protestant Writers to the Truth and Beauty of Catholicity," "Conquests of Our Holy Faith; or, Testimonies of Distinguished Converts," etc.

THE MYSTERY OF KILLARD.

BY RICHARD ROWLING

PART II.—THE WHIMS OF PLUTUS

CHAPTER X.—(CONTINUED.)

One, two, three, four whole years passed, bringing neither the lad nor tidings of him, and Edward Martin often speculated aloud as to where he had met with accident or misfortune. Mrs. Martin spoke sadly of him and wondered if he had forgotten them all. If he had not and was alive, why did he not write? He was not ignorant like the other lads of the village, but could put his ideas into language on paper, and they could not read them, at least Mary could read the letter to them. A letter coming to them towards the close of the fourth year, would have been a sealed book if they had no one to help them but the old philosopher; for the sight had faded out of Mr. Heywood's eyes, and all who knew him said he was sinking fast. His science was now quickly leaving his mind, and as he drew towards the shadowy portal behind which his long-lost Mary stood awaiting him, his affection for the living Mary increased, and he could not bear to be out of her presence. So she spent much of her time with him, talking or reading with him; when his strength decayed and she could no longer go out, even if guided and assisted by her, she came and sat with him most of the day. All the people praised her greatly for this, saying. 'A sick room is only a dull place for youth and high spirits.'

One day, as they were together, the old man said:

'Mary, I don't think I shall last very long. I am quite an old man now, and my vital power is spent. As far as I could see my way I have tried to do right. I did my best for the little Mary before you, dear. Since I have known you I have tried to do my duty to you, by imparting such instruction as befitted your age and condition. Of course it could not be expected that I should be able to make you read the higher branches; but as far as I saw my way I did my duty.'

'Indeed, indeed, sir, you did more than your duty. You owed me nothing whatever. I know I have been a great trouble and worry to you, and I ask you to forgive all the trouble and worry. I'm so worry.'

A little sob of penitence and regret came in here, and she thought it better to stop.

'I have nothing to forgive. You may have been a little wild now and then; but you did your best in trying to learn, that was the chief thing. There is another matter I wish to speak about. What o'clock is it?'

'Just twelve.'

'So early! How strangely long the days grow, and the nights still longer? They seem to have stretched out ever since I came to lie down altogether. Both have they not grown long, Mary dear?'

'No, sir, only the days. But it may seem long to you in the night, because you sleep so little.'

'Ah, yes,' wearily, 'that may have something to do with the lengthening out of time I'm sure I must have read long ago, perhaps in my little Mary's days, an account of such a thing, but it is dim now. What I wanted to say to you is that if my little darling—I mean my first one, for you are very dear, too—had lived, and I had died before her, I should have arranged that her fortune might be as well provided for as if I had lived. Now I own less than I did then; but what remains shall go to you, who have been the only happiness of my latter days, there is no relative of mine left alive. No relative—not one.'

Later he often spoke on the same subject, and about one May morning they entered the room and called to him in vain, they found all as he had promised Mary.

Four strong men of the village Edward Martin being one and Maurice Heffernan being another, carried the coffin to the churchyard through the sweet May sunshine. As they lowered it into the dark dull grave a lark sprang up close at hand, and sang out blithely in the pale blue sky. Although they had come with hearts sad enough, for they had grown to love the gray withered old man, and his gentle ways and his interest in their boys and girls, they could not but raise their eyes and follow the swift erratic course and listen to the wild melody of that unineligible rapture. For a while they stood idle, throwing no clay over the coffin, but listening and trying to see the rapidly fading bird; nor did they lower their glances until the songster had wholly disappeared in the light. Then some one threw a shovel of earth on the coffin. Again all paused to listen. They were well accustomed to that untranslatable song, but the great final fact of life in which they were engaged made the lark's notes start out into vivid relief against the background of death. What brilliant utterances of unstained joy! What mystery of inscrutable sorrow!

'Like the voice of an angel,' said a woman to another who stood by.

'Ay, singing for joy that he has met his little Mary once more.'

The people came away quieted, as though they had seen what the woman had said, and afterwards they often spoke of the old philosopher who had died among them; but they never uttered his name without thinking of his dead darling and the lark's song in the daylight of that day.

Mary Martin was very sad when she turned out of the graveyard. The way of life appeared to be rapidly narrowing. Already two beings on whom she had allowed her heart to dwell had passed beyond her view. It seemed as though henceforth she could do nothing but sit and wait for still more awful ravages of time How long would it please Providence to leave father and mother to her? And when they had gone what should she do, alone, unfriended, without sister or brother, or relative of any kind? Her mother had been an only child, and her father's people, if any still lived, of which he was doubtful, dwelt far away, near the great city of Dublin itself, where no simple village girl could hope even to go in search of them. But stay! Perhaps it would please a merciful Providence to take her first. Ah, that would be better! So much better! Yet wait a moment. How would it be with those left behind when she had gone! Ah, that would never do. They would break their hearts, poor mother! poor father! What a world it was. Things were no sooner arranged so as to satisfy than they begun changing, and changing, and changing until everything was wrong again. Would that some settled order could be relied upon. But not here. That was what we should enjoy hereafter. She could not bear to go back to the house just now, so she walked slowly and sadly up to the downs, and selecting the nook which had been a favorite haunt of the boy's, sad down with her face towards the calm blue sea.

At Killard, spring brought little more with it than long days, warmth and sunshine. There were no level fields of young corn, no rose trees, no flowers or plants before the cottage door, no waving woods, no pipe of thrush or whistle of blackbird, no chirp of robin or sparrow. Nothing but short, stiff grass could grow under the seamist. The swallow and the lark found their way there, the swiftest traveller of the air, the sweetest messenger of music. Even in summer there was something forlorn and desolate about this part of the coast of Clare. But the majestic front of embattled cliffs, and the monotonous splendor of the loud rolling ocean, lifted the thoughts above the want of woodland beauties, which would look in presence of this primitive grandeur to be no more than trivial detail.

Mary's eyes rested on the pale sea, and gradually, as if borne down by the impressive persistency of the long regular swells, her spirits sank below any depth they had hitherto reached. No definite images were in her mind, but a deep desolation of melancholy gathered all round her. It appeared as though she were fated to be the only wanderer in a silent, trackless, shadeless desert, and as if she should so wander all her life long.

The villagers who had been at the funeral gradually dispersed, and Killard resumed its ordinary dull-looking aspect. The women knitted, or scoured their pots and pans, or washed at the open doors; the husbands mended their nets, or sat talking to one another and smoking in the sunshine. All at once there arose a sudden stretching of necks and questioning. A car had driven up to Pat Casey's house, and a stranger had gone in. Presently the stranger came out, looked deliberately round the one street, and began to ascend the slope of the southern downs.

Who was he? No one knew. Perhaps some gentleman came down for a day's fishing or sailing. He'd be a welcome source of profit to some one, for times were not very good just now. Rather a fine man, to judge by his back, square shouldered and light of limb.

He went up the hill as freely as though it was the level beach. He must be going to Martin's. Some one about the old man's property, no doubt. Aye, that was it. There, he has gone into Martin's now. An attorney, anyone could tell by the look of him.

But he had come out again. Where was Edward Martin? Down on the beach spoke-shaving that man, his wife sitting on the edge of the curragh mending that sail. But it couldn't be the Martins he wanted, after all, for he had turned away from the village and disappeared on the downs. He must be only a sight-seer who went in to ask the way It was, perhaps, as well after all; it would look bad for an attorney to be so condescending as to come to poor people like the Martins, though they were the best off in the village, and now the daughter had property. How lucky she was!

The stranger went only a little way, approached the head of the cliff, looked down, and started back, saying to Mary:

'I beg your pardon. Do not let me disturb you.'

She had risen. She went about to leave the place.

'I beg of you,' he said, 'not to go. I will go instead.'

They both stood still, looking at one another. She did not wish to enter into conversation with a stranger, and he seemed so polite and kind that she did not like to pain him by making him think that she had been driven from the place by his approach.

She saw he was a hard-featured, handsome man, with very large dark eyes, a short, glossy beard and moustache. His face and hands were quite brown.

'What hair that girl has!' this man thought. 'I don't remember ever seeing such perfect golden Then she has those wonderful blue Irish eyes that people not of this country so rave about. She's tall, too, and in a few years her figure will improve much. She's too thin now. Who can she be? She does not belong to this place, I am sure. I'll try.

'Do you know this place well, may I ask?'

'Yes. Very well.'

'Do you live here?'

'Yes.'

'But you are newly come here?'

'No. I was born in this village.'

'And have lived here ever since?'

'Ever since.'

The man examined her very closely and somewhat suspiciously.

'Do you know anyone here of the name of Lane?'

'I know David Lane, of Bishop's Island.'

'Anyone else of that name in the village?'

'No. No one else.'

'But he has relatives in the village, or somewhere else about? Has he not?'

'No. He has no relatives.'

'No relatives!' in astonishment. 'But I heard he had a son, and it's about the son I've come here.'

'Oh! yes, he has a son, but he turned him away when he was young, and he's left Killard, the son, I mean, this long, long time.'

'Ah! How strange you should say that a man had no relatives, and yet you knew of a son of his.'

Mary did not care to go into family matters with a stranger, and she was little disposed to talk at all after that sad morning. But this man had spoken of their John Could he know anything of their John.

'Did you know John?' she asked.

'I came over here about him to-day. I want to see some friends of his, the Martins.'

'Oh!' she cried, turning eagerly, 'I'll show you the house. I'm—'

'Thank you,' he interrupted her, please do not disturb yourself. I've been there. I found no one in.'

A great light of interest was now in the girl's face, the blue eyes shone and she shook back the golden hair from her white smooth forehead and white round neck, as she spoke in glad haste.

'Come with me; I'll show you where father and mother are.'

'But—but may I ask who are you?'

'Mary Martin, the daughter of Edward Martin.' She was in a hurry to be off, she had gone a few paces, crying: 'Come on; I'll show you where they are.' She did not notice his start or his looks of incredulous astonishment.

'A moment!' he cried, 'a moment.' She returned unwillingly. 'But I understood Mary Martin had chestnut hair?'

'She had, but it faded to yellow since John went away. Won't you come! You can't believe how much they will like to hear all you have to say.'

He did not move, but stood with his eyes very steadily on her. She kept her glance fixed on the way she was in such haste to go.

'Stop a bit,' he said, 'I'll tell you one thing about John Lane before we set out—I am he.'

She sprang from his side, and raised her face and hands and looked.

'You?'

'Yes.'

'Our John? But you're not a bit like him. I can't believe—oh, no! You are only joking, and it's a cruel joke'

'Well, Mary, there's your ribbon, and here's the purse I bought in Limerick.'

He held both up.

'Oh, John! oh, John!—our John!' she cried hysterically, as she flung herself into his arms, 'you are so changed!'

'And so are you. Mary, you have grown to be very lovely. I never could think it.'

'But I'm a woman now.'

'And I'm a man. And, Mary, the change has improved you so much. You don't seem to think I'm changed for the better?'

'I don't know yet, John. It's all so wonderful and so good. Oh, come to father and mother? They will be glad.'

And away these two young people ran down the slope, and through the village towards the beach.

The self-same lark that sang the requiem over the old philosopher was now high in the heavens again, but the ears of the two, as hand-in-hand they flung through the street, were dulled with the hurry of happy thoughts, and they did not hear the raptures of the bird.

This lark that had sung for the return of a wanderer from the skies, a while ago, now sang for the return of a wanderer from the seas.

CHAPTER XI.

A SUMMER SAIL.

That evening a long talk was held on the beach outside Martin's cottage. The villagers had learned who the strange man was, and came to welcome him home and hear accounts of foreign parts. All were astonished at the alteration of John Lane. He had left Killard four years before a long, lank, awkward, uncouth, abrupt, gloomy, taciturn lad; he had come back a broad, bronzed, bearded, handsome man. That was wonderful. But more wonderful still was the change in his manner. Now he was full of animal spirits, could make a joke and take one, told stories that caused the solemn, sad-mannered fishermen to laugh, and sang a song composed by a fellow digger, for he had been 'up after gold.'

He had seen a good deal of life in those four years, and, young as he was, his quick, impulsive nature had penetrated the heart of the world, and he knew man pretty well now. He had spent the latter two years in gold diggings, the former at sea. He had not learned to dispise mankind or scoff at the world. He held that both were good in the main; bad only, as it were, by unlucky accident.

While a boy he had been greatly addicted to extreme ideas; as a man he had learned moderation. He did not laugh at the world, nor sneer at it, nor praise it rapturously, but he laughed rather than carped, smiled rather than sneered, and praised as much as he could.

Although only twenty-one years old in years, he was thirty in knowledge, and knowledge had not saddened or depraved him. He put matters to himself in a figurative way; he generally thought figuratively and often spoke so when he had an audience he liked.

'I shall,' he said to himself, 'laugh rather than weep, when there is no harm in laughing and no virtue in tears. If there's a sunny and a showery side to the road, I'll walk in the sunshine when there is no harm in the sun and no virtue in the shower.'

'And tell us how you get the gold out of the mine?' asked one of the fishermen that evening.

'Well, you see, the mine isn't a very splendid place by any means. When I shoveled with a narrow strip of sand at the side of the hill. We dig up the sand, put it into a gourd, tin pail, bucket, old boot, what you will, and then wash it until all the sand is gone and all the gold is there.'

'And all the gold is there!' repeated the questioner in reverental awe, as though he stood in the presence of the gold, and found in it a very close resemblance to Lord Clonmore and Father Murtagh in tone, and felt bound to call the yellow metal 'Your Reverent Lordship,' or by some other compound acknowledgment of his object inferiority.

'And are you never robbed?' inquired another.

'Sometimes. Not often. It's an unpleasant and unsafe line of life, that of a digger-robber. You see this,' he pulled a revolver out of his pocket. 'You see that chimney-pot on Fahey's house? Now watch!'

He raised his arm and fired. The woman screamed at the report.

'You can't see much of that chimney-pot now, can you? Well, every man sleeps with his gold near him, and if another man comes wanting his gold, why, he generally gets lead instead, and lead inside the skin is neither wholesome nor pleasant.'

'John Lane,' said Edward Martin, very seriously, 'I hope you never did any harm to any one with that thing in your hand?'

He regarded the weapon with an expression of the strongest disapproval.

'I'm afraid, sir,' Lane began and recommenced. 'You must take everything into account, sir—the situation, the temptation.'

'I don't know anything about what you are speaking of; but did you ever do any harm with that thing?'

The listeners waited impatiently and somewhat nervously for the reply. They had no liking for that weapon, and they by no means relished the idea of this young man, with his light notions of life, sending bullets flying around in that way.

What a strange fancy for firearms ran in this family! No one else in Killard ever had a firearm except these Lanes If he had shot a man out there they should be very sorry, for they rather liked young Lane now that his ways were pleasant and wholesome and free.

In answering the question Lane hesitated a good deal.

'Well, sir, to tell the truth, I—I don't pretend for a moment to say I was justified in what I did, but I'll tell you all about it.'

The villagers gathered close round. Martin's eyes were sternly fixed on the young man's face; Mrs. Martin waited in breathless expectancy, and Mary looked as though she would sicken at the details of the revolting deed.

'You see, although I had no strong ground for distrusting the man, still I didn't like the look of the thing, and the only time I did any harm with lead was in this way; I was sitting one evening, and all at once I began thinking of my old dislike; I looked suddenly round and down. Right under me! 'Ah! by Jove!' said I, 'here's a chance,' and I raised my rifle and fired.'

The people shuddered.

'Well!' said Edward Martin.

'Well,' cried the young man, starting up and pointing towards the village, 'and I hit and smashed Fahey's chimney-pot, but upon my honor I'll buy him a new one when I go to Clonmore.'

The woman laughed, partly at the relief and partly at the joke; the men smiled and felt a little betrayed, yet young Lane's light and joyous manner had won the people, and when the little meeting broke up the neighbors said nothing but good words of the returned exile.

Mary could not yet decide whether the change in John was for the better. One John had gone away, another had come back. Somehow it seemed as though there was no possibility of deciding the question. One thing, at all events, seemed quite certain—it was a most wonderful improvement to have him back again.

Ah! if Mr. Heywood had only lived to see John! It was so great a pity that the good, kind old man should have left them forever on the very day that their John came back. Whether John's personal appearance had improved or disimproved might be subject of doubt; there could be no question of the improvement in his manner. How gay and light-hearted and pleasant he was. He would not shun her now, nor give her cross words, but would sit and tell all about foreign places, all about his adventures in the wonderful land of gold from which he had so blessedly returned. It was so good to have him back again. Of course to-morrow would be a fine day.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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sept 16—3i

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