

The Little Silver Cross.

A fine autumn evening in the year of grace 1594. A woman of middle age stood in the doorway of a comfortable farm house on the banks of Lough Erne and gazed out across the landscape.

Conor Oge MacGuire, head of the Fermanagh clans, had just been knighted by the astute Perrot and was known as the King's MacGuire, but Hugh, son of Connaught despising his kinsman's honors, collected a number of followers and indignantly refused to bear allegiance to the foreign King.

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Cathal MacManus was amongst the first to rally to the side of the Irish MacGuire. He was descended from a warlike race who were never known to accept a bribe or betray a friend.

Then without another word they parted, and he followed his father across moor and stream.

That was a week ago and she hadn't heard a word from them since. The battle was still raging, and the wayfarers told her that the Irish were fighting for the dear life.

Mistress MacManus stood in the doorway and peered out into the gathering dusk. Overhead the moon sailed majestically in a sea of gray and fluffy clouds, and the call of the woodcocks and snipes came faint across the lake.

Lying amid the long yellow grass that covered the hillside was a motionless form. As she approached a human head was raised, and a soldier's red tunic came into view.

She paused and looked about her in an agitated manner. It was not quite safe to be there with one of the enemy.

"Don't be frightened, mistress," said the red-coated figure, struggling to his feet. "I shan't harm you."

And yet she hesitated. Maybe he was a spy.

"I am wounded. I am bleeding to death."

The pleading tones no less than the words decided her. Friend or foe it must not be said that she refused to help the wounded.

For the next two hours she had forgotten her own sorrows in tending to the wounded man. For women and wives sometimes forget. She carefully bandaged his injured limb, and giving him something to eat, showed him to her own boy's bed. And then in the silence of the cottage she thought and wept.

bers. To her the aspect was life—her life, love and peace, then war, cruel and merciless, and, finally, death and the darkness of the end. She looked up and saw that he was still pacing the floor and speaking. "Son of Man, you must away! From cairn and cloister the message comes borne on the four winds, and the breezes have the tongues of friendly spirits. It's good to die for Eri of the chains. What is life and peace and joy compared with the smile of the great Queen?"

He paused. The woman sat motionless like one turned to stone, and not a sound escaped her lips. In that instant she realized that there were other loves in the world than hers. The lad was standing open-mouthed in the doorway, and there was a smile upon his face that sent a tremor through his mother's frame.

"My father is right," he said putting his arm about her waist. "Good men give up everything when the white-bosomed Queen wills it, and doubly blessed is he that has seen the smile upon her face."

He kissed her upon the cheek, and his lips rested for a moment upon her face; it was a foretaste of heaven for her.

She turned angrily towards his father. "So you have turned the child's mind, too, with your old stories about Eri. I told you long ago that it would come to this some day."

The lad kissed her again and her anger subsided.

"And you?" she said inquiringly, her eyes meeting his.

"I will go over the hills, too. The Great Voice has called for all—nay do not bid me stay behind."

He hitched up the coat on his shoulders and strode towards the door. She called him back, and pulling from her bosom a tiny silver cross at the end of a chain, she hung it around his neck.

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In the days that came after the soldier told her of the progress of the battle. The Irish MacGuire and his handful of men were holding out bravely, but it could be only for a

short time. The English were forming a cordon round them, and when once completed escape was impossible for those within.

"Will you be back with them before that?" she asked eagerly, scrutinizing his face.

"I shall be in the fighting line when that time comes," he replied, and it never struck him that the woman's kindness merited even a little consideration. He had the soldier's rough and ready way.

For a moment she looked intently at him, and then fell upon her knees at his feet. "Will you promise me one thing?" she said, striking his hand.

"Anything under heaven," he answered, for he was not ungrateful, and she had been a mother to him.

"Promise—promise!" and the words almost choked her, "that you will save my boy. You can plead with your general for him—he's only a child."

"But how am I to know your boy?" "You would know him in a million. He is dark as night, and his eyes are of the deepest blue. He is erect as the willow, and manly, but for all that he's only a child."

"I promise," he said taking the hand she extended to him.

"But there's one thing that I forgot," she went on. "You'll know him best by the little silver cross that he wears round his neck. It's a blessed relic."

The soldier sat upright and gazed at the speaker, and the color suddenly went out of his face. "I know," he said slowly, "I know," and he walked towards his room.

He was to leave next morning, but when she knocked at his door she received no response. Fearing that he had taken suddenly unwell she went inside. The bed had been slept on, but the room was empty. Her patient had fled.

Again she was left alone with her sorrow. What could the soldier have meant by running off like that? Was he but a dirty government spy after all, and had she been nursing a viper all the time? The thought enraged her.

She paced the floor of the little cottage impatiently, and at times pulled violently at her brown hair. She could not endure this suspense much longer. Her strength was rapidly giving way, and when the two returned victorious from the battle, some day soon, they would maybe find her a cold corpse.

A heavy step on the gravelled pathway outside disturbed the train of her musing, and she ran to the doorway. A white-faced man confronted her; his clothing was torn in shreds, and his underjacket of white linen was dyed red. She screamed when she recognized her husband. He had aged thirty years in the days since they parted.

He kissed her, and together they entered the house.

"Where's the lad?" she asked impatiently watching his face.

He affected not to hear her question. "It was a great sight," he said. "They were a hundred to one, but we drove them back from our cover again and again. Ah, it was a great day for Eri."

"But the boy—our child, where is he?"

"Hush, woman, hush," waving his hand in an admonishing way. "Hugh MacGuire led the main body at the top of the hill, but I headed the men who guarded the ford. Conor Oge and his men made an attempt to get across where the water is shallow. For a time I didn't know what to do, but at last I hit upon a plan of the flood his men must surely perish."

"And the lad—was he with you? Is he dead, man? Will you not speak of the boy?"

"We didn't fail, but the loss was great. Yesterday the King's men retreated over the moor, and I came home to tell you the news."

He paused, and she sat listening for what he had yet to say.

"When I was coming over the hills I met an English scout. He was coming straight from here."

"From here?"

"Aye, straight as an arrow. He was a young lad, too, but an enemy, so I shot him."

"You shot him?" she screamed, rising and facing him.

"Aye, I shot him. On his clothing I found this," handing her a white parcel tied with a colored ribbon. "It tells its own story." She untied the ribbon and, folded back the cover, as she did so a startled exclamation escaped her lips, and she fell to the floor in a faint.

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ST. ANN'S YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY organized 1885.—Meets in its hall, 157 Ottawa street, on the first Sunday of each month, at 2.30 p.m. Spiritual Adviser, Rev. Father Flynn, C.S.S.R.; President, R. J. Byrne; Treasurer, Thomas O'Connell; Rec.-Sec., Robt. J. Hart.

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EPISCOPAL If the English-speaking people are interested, they would soon find that the Catholic papers in this country will be found in a number of places.

NOTES SOME LESSONS.—To co-religionists and fellow-workers who have the ambition to live we would suggest perusal of the brief sketches of the venerable and able figures in the administrative work of the day.—Hon. R. which will be found in a number of places.

Leaving aside the question of partisanship with vices, "True Witness" is not a paper that has less than there are lessons in the career of the Senate, which room for doubt that he had the courage of his convictions. At no period in Catholic history was there more need for men of culture, energy and courage than when they will leave the impressions of their characteristics not only in statute books but also in the minds and hearts of their people.

CATHOLIC BOYS' UNION.—In the New York "Sun" is letter signed "A Protestant Man," in which the writer from experience, that he perceives boys those from the parochial schools to those in the Protestant public schools. Speaking in particular of a Catholic school boy, and giving for his preference, the writer says: "His arithmetic has a value in rapidity and accuracy of writing is uniform and, a good; he can read with rapidity and accuracy; and this is where he is far ahead of other boys—understand a man's instructions, and follow them diligently."

This is what the business wants in a boy's education also what the state needs. A potent fact that this is the character of the training received in Catholic schools. The only thing that can be raised is that same schools the boys are taught religion. And what this is an objection when fact of being taught their one of the reasons why the successful in other lines? In the schools with which we are acquainted—those, for example the care of the Christian imparted therein is of such a nature and superior character our business men, who have the experience of those who always anxious for more of this is surely a striking testimony in favor of the teaching of religion in the general education and of the young—a testimony in favor of our Catholic system of education.

METHODS OF ATTACK.—Ancients had a saying that pressed in one graphic line, the Greeks even when they fight. There are also people whose advice is to be for it is usually intended as a couple of weeks ago a certain Catholic organ in England that the Catholic schools might be supported from funds collected for Church building in a stately building in Ireland. The contemporary asks if the suggestion cannot be the lessening of building in which employs labor, would thereby to solve the English from its duty in providing

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