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Reddite quæ sunt Cæsaris, Cæsari; et quæ sunt Dei, Deo.—Matt 22: 21.

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MICHAEL BANIM.

MICHAEL BANIM was born in Kilkenny in August, 1796. For many years of his boyhood he attended the school of Mr. Buchanan in his native town. This school the eccentric proprietor dignified with the name of "The English Academy," and the curious reader may find a true and amusing picture of both this establishment and its master in the pages of "Father Connell." On leaving this school Michael was sent to what was considered the foremost Catholic school in Ireland, conducted by Dr. Magrath. When about sixteen years of age his father offered him choice of a profession, and he decided on the bar. With this end in view he studied closely for about two years, and attained a considerable knowledge of law, when a reverse of fortune overtook his father and brought on delicate health. With a self-sacrifice for which his whole life was remarkable, Michael Banim gave up his cherished design, and quietly stepped back into what he considered the path of duty. He took up the tangled threads of business, applied his whole energy and perseverance to the task, and at length had the satisfaction of unravelling the complication and replacing his parents in comfort, both material and mental. When his life became comparatively easier he used his leisure hours for reading and study, and spent his spare time in rambles through the beautiful scenery of county Kilkenny. In these journeys his peculiar kindness of manner won the confidence of the peasantry, and enabled him to gain that deep insight which he afterwards reproduced in his life-like portraits of character.

The arrival of John Banim on a visit in 1822, after the success of his drama "Damon and Pythias," gave a new direction to Michael's ideas. In one of their rambles John detailed his plan of writing a series of national tales, in which he would strive to represent the Irish people truly to the English public. Michael approved of the idea, and incidentally related some circumstances which he considered would serve as the foundation of an interesting novel. John, struck with the story and the clear manner of its narration, at once advised Michael to write it himself. After some hesitation the elder brother consented, and the result was one of the most popular among the first series of "The O'Hara Tales," "Crohoore of the Bill Hook." This was written, as were his succeeding productions, in the hours which he could spare from business. To assist John with his work, "The Boyne Water," Michael travelled in the south of Ireland and supplied him with a description of the siege of Limerick and the route taken by Sarsfield to intercept the enemy's supplies. An adventure befell him during this tour, which he also placed at the disposal of his brother, and it forms the introduction of John Banim's novel "The Nowlans." In 1826 Michael visited his brother in London, and there made the acquaintance of Gerald Griffin, John Sterling, and other celebrities. In the following year the struggle for Catholic emancipation was in progress, and, putting himself under the leadership of O'Connell, he devoted his energies to the cause. In 1828 "The Croppy" appeared. He had been engaged on this work at intervals during the previous two years. Although not so full of striking situations nor as sensational as "Crohoore," the characters were more carefully drawn and the composition more easy and natural. For some time he was entirely prostrated with severe illness, and almost five years elapsed before the appearance of his next tale, "The Ghost Hunter and his Family." This was considered by the critics quite equal to the best of "The O'Hara Tales," and presents a striking picture of Irish virtue. "The Mayor of Windgap" appeared in 1834, followed by "The Bit o' Writin'," "The Hare, Hand, and the Witch," and other tales. About this time the news of his brother's failing health alarmed him, and he wrote earnestly entreating John to return with his family and share his home. "If it be the will of God you should sink under your sufferings," he writes, "is it no consolation to have me near you and yours?" In the same letter he says, "You speak a great deal too much about what you think you owe me; as you are my brother never allude to it again. My creed on this subject is, that one brother should not want while the other can supply him." About 1840 Michael married Miss Catherine O'Dwyer. At this time his means were ample, and with a considerable sum—the saving of years—he enjoyed comparative independence. But scarcely a year elapsed after his marriage when the merchant in whose care his property had been placed failed, and Michael Banim found himself

almost a ruined man. Along this reverse would have affected him little, but he grieved for his young wife; his health suffered severely, and for two years his life was despaired of. On his partial recovery he wrote one of his best novels—"Father Connell." In this work the author sketches to the life the good priest whom he had known and loved in his childhood, and we find the piety, simplicity, and peculiarities of Father O'Donnell reproduced in "Father Connell." The publisher to whom this novel was entrusted failed after a portion of it was in type. The failure resulted from no fault of his own, and in time he was able to resume his business. This, however, delayed the appearance of the work, and, no doubt owing to this disappointment the author became discouraged, and it was many years before he again resumed his pen. "Clough Fion" at length appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* for 1852, and as its plot turned on a popular grievance of the country—evictions—it was well received. Through the Earl of Carlisle the author was appointed postmaster of his native city. For many years the duties of this office were sufficient occupation for him, his delicate state of health being now increased by a bleeding from the lungs. "The Town of the Cascades," published in 1864, was his last literary work, and quite equalled his former productions. Its purpose was to paint in a popular form the awful effects of the vice of intemperance. In 1873 his health became completely broken, and he was forced to resign his position as postmaster, and retire with his family to Booterstown, a prettily situated coast-town in the county of Dublin. Before leaving Kilkenny his fellow-townsmen testified their respect and admiration for his talents by an address and handsome presentation. Shortly afterwards the committee of the Royal Literary Fund recognized his services by making him an annual allowance, which was both well deserved and opportune. He expired on the 30th of August, 1874, leaving a widow and two daughters. The premier, Mr. Disraeli, interested on her behalf by Dr. R. R. Madden and Mr. Burke, under-secretary, Dublin Castle, granted Mrs. Banim a pension from the civil list.

A CARPENTER'S WONDERFUL WORK.

HERMAN JACOBS, a carpenter of Bunzlau, Prussia, has been credited with constructing a wonderful piece of mechanism representing in several successive scenes the Passion of the Saviour. All the actors are carved from wood, and are each about six inches in height. The machinery runs by clock work, and enacts the various parts three times at each winding. The panorama first unfolded is a beautiful garden, with the figure of Jesus kneeling in prayer under one of the trees, figures of the three sleeping Apostles being plainly discernible in the distance.

As the machinery warms up, the wheels and the figures move more rapidly, quickly unfolding the last scenes in the earthly career of Jesus—the Last Supper, the betrayal, the remorseful look which comes over the face of Judas when he first realizes the extent of his crime, the examination of Jesus before Caiaphas, the dialogue between Pilate and the Jews—all lit before the gaze in a manner so astonishingly life like and real as to make one almost believe himself at Calvary. After the sentence has been pronounced a figure of Jesus with the cross appears.

The cross is mechanically erected, while the little figures busy themselves in binding the figure to be nailed upon it. Ladders are run up to the arms of the cross, a little figure slips quietly over the rungs, then there is a sound of hammers as two figures hold the one that is being nailed to the cross by the two figures on the ladders. At last, when all is thought to be finished, a figure on horseback glides across the platform, draws his sword and thrusts it into the side of the figure on the cross. The last scene represents Jesus in the sepulchre with angels guarding the remains.

Mr. Adams, in his "Letters on Silesia," says: "It is the most remarkable piece of mechanism I have ever seen. The traitor's kiss, the scourging, the nailing to the cross, the sponge of vinegar and every seeming pain inflicted, occasion feelings which cannot be felt at a mere description."