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THE MOTHER OF THE RENEGADE.

(From the Catholic Magazine, 1835.)

The storm raged violently on a night in October last, when a knock came to the door of the Rev. —, Catholic clergyman, near —. The reverend gentleman had just retired to bed, having been fatigued after returning from his attendance on a poor man who had that day died of cholera; he called to a little boy who was the only inmate of the house at that time, to arise and see what was wanted. The boy arose, and having inquired who was there, a man answered, and said that the priest was wanted for a woman who was just at the point of death. The priest arose and admitted the stranger, and expostulated with him upon the unseasonableness of the hour, and the awful state of the night, and pressed him to allow him, if possible, to postpone his attendance on the sick woman until morning;—that, perhaps, there was no fear of her death; that there would be much more fear of his, if he ventured on such a journey under such circumstances. No argument on the part of the priest could induce the stranger to permit him to remain, even until the storm would subside—the case was urgent—there were more reasons than even the death of the woman, should she die without the rites of the Church, which rendered it imperative on him to lose no time. The stranger spoke in a tone of much earnestness, and with great propriety of language. "I know," said the priest, "that the woman you speak of is a parishioner of mine, but you are a perfect stranger to me. I did not know that she had any male relation in the rank of life to which you seem to belong, except persons who would be the last in the world to call upon a priest on an occasion like this—are you her son?" "No," said the stranger, "I am not, but I am a relative of hers from another part of Ireland; I came to her on business connected with our unhappy fate. I shall explain all to you as we proceed on our journey."

The stranger rode a good horse, and the priest ordered his to be got ready without a moment's delay. The travellers proceeded along a narrow lane which led from the humble mansion of the priest to the high road. The following is the description given by the reverend gentleman himself, of the night, and the feelings which agitated his breast on the occasion:

"When we got to the main road the storm increased, it was awfully dark, and the wind and rain were directly in our faces—we had nearly five miles to travel, and the part of the parish to which we were going was not well known to me, I had hardly ever been in it, and was almost ignorant of the road. Thunder, which is unusual at this season of the year, pealed with a fearful noise, and the flashes of lightning threw a livid glare over the mountains in the distance, and seemed as if sent by the Deity in His anger, to give us a faint glimpse of the horrors by which we were surrounded, and then leave us shrouded in impenetrable darkness. We felt tolerably secure until we turned off the high road into a narrow mountain pass, where our horses stumbled at every step they made, and seemed terrified at the roaring of the torrent down the mountain side. Nothing could be more appalling or more calculated to give the mind an impression of the anger of the great Creator of the universe.—'The dark side of creation was turned to us.' The wind raged with such violence we could hardly keep our seats in the saddle—the rain fell in torrents—the mountain streams swelled into vast rivers, rushed down their sides with fearful violence—the thunder was multiplied by the echoes between the mountain, and the perpetual flashes of lightning threw an awful but evanescent light upon the whole. Oh! the anger of the Creator must be a fearful thing. It has been well said by the poet, that 'We see His anger in the rack which clouds the light of day, and His mercy in the calm and sunshine.' May His mercy be always extended to us. I was ignorant too of who my companion was. I had misgivings as to the truth of the story he told me, but I had set out on the work of my divine Master—I could not know fear. We entered a defile that lay between two ridges of mountain, and having turned directly to the right, we were no longer facing the storm, and were sheltered by the hills on each side of us. 'We can now,' said the stranger, 'that we have time to draw our breath, have a little conversation so as to prepare you for the scene which you will have immediately to encounter. In the first place a word about myself. I am a student in the college of —, and am an aspirant to the sacred profession of which you are a member. The house to which I am leading you is that of my aunt, a poor old woman, worn out with a heart-corroding care which has preyed upon her for many years—she is now at the point of death, and at her house is a brother of mine; his wife, and infant child—my brother is also, I fear, at the point of death; he was removed there a few days ago to escape detection—he is mortally wounded—his poor unfortunate wife, just on the eve of giving birth to

a child, has arrived this day to see him ere he dies. What led to the conflict in which he was wounded was this: Certain landlords are acting upon advice given by wretched fanatics and apostates, and are driving out the Papists, as they call them, from their estates. A cousin of ours, who has a large family, and who was always a good tenant, was one of the persons thus driven out, and a Northern Orangeman put in his place. His friends unfortunately planned an attack on the new tenant and his house, and my poor brother was induced to be of the party—the new comer, it appears, was prepared for his visitants, for the sequel of it was, that my brother was mortally wounded, several others slightly, and the unfortunate man who had been dispossessed was taken, and is now in gaol, and his unfortunate family are in a state of destitution and misery that is truly heart-rending. My brother was in rather comfortable circumstances, and would not be suspected of having anything to do with such lawless confederations—but the poor man trembled for his own fate—he did not know how soon his landlord would cast him out on the wide world, and the confederates foolishly thought that making an early example would deter new comers and landlords from acting upon the plan of getting rid of the Popish population. The woman to whose house we are now going has a son—'I am aware of that,' said the priest—'well then you know that that son has changed his religion, and that he has rendered himself somewhat conspicuous by his hostility against the faith of his fathers and his friends, and that if report be true, he is one of the abettors and instigators of this new system, and, as if God in His judgments had decreed it, it has so happened that the tragical effects arising from such a course, has fallen upon his own flesh and blood. His mother is now, as I told you, at the point of death. Some days since she wrote to him, and I believe gave him her bitter curse and malediction if he did not renounce his new religion—that, of course, he never will do, at least publicly. She has some awful secret in her breast with regard to this son; it will, of course, be revealed to you this night; you have much to encounter; you are going to the house of mourning and sorrow; you have still more to encounter: her son, finding that she was at the point of death, has written to the Protestant rector of the parish to come and attend his mother at her death, and prevent her, if possible, from dying a Papist.' The rector to whom he wrote was not at home, but a clergyman deputed by him has come to attend my aunt at this important crisis. He arrived to-day, a little before I set out for you, and his instructions are not to leave her until she is dead or in a fair way of recovery."

Such was the detail given by the stranger to the priest, every word of which excited in his bosom an intensity of interest, which he found it impossible to express by words—he only raised his eyes to heaven, and prayed for assistance in the coming trial both of his faith, and his fortitude. "God's will be done, young man," said he, "but do you know who the clergyman is that has come to attend your aunt—if it be the rector of the parish, I would be very sorry to meet him; he is a very bigoted man; he is a furious Conservative, as they now style themselves, and his denunciations against the Catholic faith are almost blasphemous." The other replied that he had already stated his belief, that it was not the rector, as he was not in the country at present.

The storm abated a little—the rising moon began to emerge through the watery clouds that were hurried by the wind through the atmosphere, and when she arose above the horizon appeared like a meteor flitting through the waves of a dark and troubled sea. The mountains and houses struggled into light, and although the storm raged with violence, they could distinctly see the road, and avoid the deep pools of water and broken gulleys that continually impeded their course. In the midst of their conversation they arrived at the habitation of the poor woman—the priest knocked at the door, which was opened by a servant in a rich livery; he held a kind of carriage lamp in his hand; and when he saw that persons had arrived he ejaculated a prayer of thanksgiving that relief had come to him, for he was almost dead with terror. The servant belonged to the rich rector; he had come after the clergyman who came to attend the dying woman, in order to conduct him safely home; he found the reverend gentleman in great agony of mind, and determined not to leave the house that night—the terrified servant heard nothing but the moans of the dying, and the wailings of despair, and the arrival of the midnight travellers was hailed by him with joy. The priest and the young man entered—the parson came to meet them; the priest, on seeing him, started back with surprise, and taking him by the hand, greeted him in the most friendly way; the joy of the other manifested itself in terms that could not be misunderstood. "My dear friend," said the parson, "you come to me in the hour of trial; I am totally unfit for the mission I have come on.

The rector of — has been at a watering place. He wrote to me to stay in his parish until his return; his flock are few in number; I never got a sick call since he went until this, and the rector himself would have come, but he was unable to travel such a distance; but he wrote to me in the most earnest terms, regarding the death of this woman, and inclosed to me the letter of her son, who wished his attendance on her. I find the woman is still a Catholic, and God forbid I should come to force a change of religion on her at the hour of death.

"God bless you," said the priest, "I always pray for you when I enter the chapel of —. But how are the unfortunate people in this wretched habitation?" The parson replied that he had seen no person since his arrival but the old woman whom he came to attend, and her attendant, but that the groans and sighs in the adjoining room were heart-rending, that he endeavored to gain admittance, but could not, from the door being fastened inside. That the servant who followed him was so terrified that he was going to run away. The priest desired that the servant should be sent home, and that he would feel a great obligation to his friend, if he would remain with him until morning. After the servant's departure the door was closed, and a female, who was the sole attendant on the old woman, and who had previously denied to the parson any knowledge of the occupiers of the closed room, provided rush lights, and the priest having examined the old woman, found that she was on the point of death. I shall, said he, administer to her the rites of our holy religion, but ask her, he continued to the parson, if she wishes to die a Protestant. The rev. gentleman then approached her and said, that it was the wish of her son that she should die a Protestant, but that the priest was now arrived, and she might choose as her conscience dictated. "Die a Protestant! Oh! no, I have lived a Catholic, and I will die one. Oh! my son, my lost son! the blood of his murdered friends—the blood of the young, the beautiful, and the innocent—is already on him. She was fair and comely to behold;—the secret of her fate is in my heart. I concealed the guilt of a son that was once dear to me; it preys heavily upon me; it kept me many years from bending my knee to a priest. I educated my son well; I intended him for the priesthood—but the fate of — when he was going to college prevented that; it is well. Oh! the loss of my soul is on his head too; it is a hard thing for a mother to curse her son, but what he has done last of all is worst of all—he recommended driving out of the country all the poor Catholics; he recommended the destruction of his own flesh and blood; of the mother that watched over his infancy with a careful eye; of the sisters who loved him, and who were his playmates in the days of his youth—in fine, of his kindred and connexions. Oh! it is a wonder that the spirits of his forefathers do not rise from their graves, and chide him for his barbarity.—Oh! my son, my lost son; it is a cruel thing for a mother to give her curse to her own offspring. But he cannot be my son, he is a changeling that was left me in the place of my dear —, when an infant in the cradle—ay, the spirits of the air took away my dear —, and left that monster in his place. (Here she pronounced a curse, for which the priest severely reproached her.) No, he is not my son, for I now see my —, a smiling infant, as he was the day I left him in his cradle, and that I thought he was not the same when I returned." The poor woman was in a fit of delirium, and it was not until after a short, but uneasy sleep that she was restored to a state of consciousness. In the interim, the priest informed his friend of the particulars relating to the persons in the adjoining room which had been previously entered by the young man who accompanied the priest. On entering the room, a sight presented itself, which appalled the heart of the rev. gentleman. A fine young man (for such the sufferer was) was lying in the agonies of death, and his wife, an interesting looking woman, kneeling by him with his hand pressed to her bosom, and she in the agonies of sickness and despair—a sleeping infant about two years old was beyond the father in the bed;—when the light was brought in, the mother looked wildly around her, and then looked into the face of her husband, who was wholly unconscious of the sorrow that surrounded him. "Oh! you are come in good time," said she; "I thought when I heard a parson was in the house, that he was come to deliver up my dear husband to the peelers, and the law; and I would sooner he should die here without succor than let him fall into their hands. Ah! he is dying; but see my dear child, how it sleeps beyond him. Oh! it will soon be without a father—but see how it smiles in its sleep—it is now whispering with angels; my beloved child, tell the holy angels that are whispering to you, to have mercy on your father's soul, and tell them to watch over and guard your mother—Jo, my babe, and sleep on in peace, that you may say a great deal to the holy angels.

Oh! may you be like your father, who is now dying in his mother's arms—no one ever saw his frown in his own house; he brought peace and happiness wherever he went, and he loved in his tender, but manly heart, your poor mother. Oh, whisper to the holy angels to take him up to heaven, where you, the child of his soul, and I the pulse of his heart, will one day meet him." This, said the parson, is too much for me, I am unaccustomed to such scenes; he burst into a flood of tears, and left the room. The priest remained to give the consolations of religion to the dying man, who expired in a few moments after. The wretched wife fell upon his lifeless body, and fainted away. She was seized with the pains of labor, and in giving birth to a dead child, she died herself.

What pen can describe the scene of sorrow that here presents itself to the reverend gentlemen, thus strangely brought together? The sleeping infant did not awake until its ill-fated parents were both lifeless; it was removed by the female attendant to a neighboring house, and the cries of the poor thing for its mamma, would pierce the hardest heart. The old woman had slept until her wretched relatives had breathed their last. She awoke in a state of perfect recollection, and enjoyed that momentary calm and relief from suffering, which generally precedes death. She enquired most anxiously how her nephew was, and, being told, that both he and his wife were gone to rest, she said she was certain that they would both soon die, that whilst she slept, she thought they came to her dressed in beautiful new clothes, shining like silver, and they told her to go along with them to a new house they were removing to. The priest finding that she was perfectly sensible and composed, asked her if she wished to die in the Catholic faith, and that if she did, she must make a general confession of her sins, forgive all mankind, particularly her son, whom she had been cursing before she fell asleep—at the mention of his name she looked wildly around, and requested that the priest would come close to her until she revealed to him the secrets of her heart. She desired him to take from under her head an old prayer-book, that in the book he would find a document sealed up, which related to her son, and to the beautiful and unfortunate —.

—that the part she took in that melancholy affair, in order to screen the guilt of her son, kept her from going to confession for nearly twenty years. The wretched woman made her peace with God, and ere nine o'clock on that morning she died, praying for her son, and charging the priest to communicate to him what she openly disclosed to him, and make every exertion to bring him back to the faith of his fathers. A few hours before the old woman breathed her last, a great noise made by the trampling of horses was heard outside the door—immediately, without a question being asked, it was burst in, and a great number of armed police rushed into the house; their captain or chief called out to his men to surround the house closely, that they had fortunately arrived at the Rockite rendezvous before the villains had all dispersed—before the horse police arrived at the house, the captain and some of his men stole up softly to reconnoitre; it was hardly day-light. The priest, parson, brother to the unfortunate man who was dead, and a neighboring man who had just come in, were in the house, and were indistinctly seen by the advanced guard of the police, and were taken to be fellows in guilt with the unfortunate man, of whom they were in pursuit; the police, therefore, deemed it expedient to rush in and seize the party before they could offer any effectual resistance. The parson was standing muffled up in a heavy outside coat, waiting for the clear light of day, until he would proceed on his way home; he was next to the door, when the police rushed in, and before he knew who they were, or what they wanted, he was seized by three huge fellows, and a pair of handcuffs slipped on him in the twinkling of an eye. The other two men were seized, and the police were in the act of handcuffing them when a light was brought, and they discovered their mistake with regard to the parson. The priest was sitting on the bed-side of the woman who was at the point of death—the police were somewhat cooled in their ardor by the awkward mistake they made in handcuffing the parson, and the sight before them seemed totally inexplicable to them. Their captain or chief, a swarthy, dapper little fellow, with a puritanical cast of countenance, and a kind of cast in one of his eyes, made a thousand apologies to the parson for the mistake his men had made; but then it was in the zealous discharge of their duty they did it; they required to be vigilant and to preserve their own lives, at all hazard; they were often taken by surprise, by the country people, and it was the duty of the police to surprise them in turn, wherever they could. The worthy captain concluded a long harangue, consisting chiefly of apology for the mistake, and eulogy of himself and his men. He added, that it was astonishing to find a parson in such a place. During

this parley, the police had the house closely surrounded, and half a dozen of them proceeded to the room where the unfortunate pair lay dead.—One of the fellows cried out, "hallo, captain, order close guard to be kept, here is a fellow, and some one in woman's clothes besides—they pretend to be dead, but it will be reality with them soon enough. Come old boys," he continued, at the same time giving the lifeless bodies a couple of smart prods of his bayonet, "do you feel anything. I'll be bail, if you are not foxing, that will make you jump." After about half a dozen of experiments of this kind, they cried out, that they were actually dead. Two or three other fellows gathered round the bed of the old woman, who was just about to breathe her last, and one of them gave her a push over in the bed with the butt-end of his gun, for the purpose of examining if any one were concealed under it—the wretched woman was insensible to the cruel treatment she received, for, in order that he might be doubly sure that no one lurked beneath the bed, he screwed on his bayonet, and prodded it in several places. The young man who had been the messenger for the priest, having borne a resemblance to his unfortunate brother who was dead, was arrested and handcuffed. The captain then interrogated him in the following manner: "Now, sir, it is my painful duty, as a magistrate and officer of police to put a few questions to you; but, sir, at the same time, I caution you in the most solemn manner, not to say one word that would criminate yourself; any confession you now make of your guilt can have no other effect, but that of being brought against yourself on the day of your trial; so now, sir, pause well before you make any disclosure relating to yourself. I was wrong, sir, in saying that I would put any question to you in any shape, that would not be legal, but I leave it to yourself to make the confession or let it alone, as you think proper—take your time and consider." The hedge captain then strutted towards the door, and shut his bad eye, and began to view the rising sun with his worse eye. A sergeant of the police, an old "tactician," who had been a kind of village apothecary, and who had turned king's evidence against a number of men, who were tried at the — assizes for conspiracy, and all hanged, walked over to the handcuffed man, and said: "Well, is not our captain a humane creature; now be cautioned you not to say a word against yourself, but at the same time I can tell you that if you wish to be saved and rewarded too, your only way would be to tell all you know, and my life for yours that the captain will save you at the assizes—and that"—the priest was so situated that he heard the admonition given by this villain to the young man, and he turned round, and told him to be silent. "I have known," continued the priest, "of several persons being hanged at the last assizes of — by this mode of making men criminate themselves—this is what is called the entrapping system, and that hero gone out there, figured most conspicuously as an entrapper, and reader of confessions." The young man replied that he had nothing to tell about the matter at all; that he was in the college of — on the night of the occurrence. After a most diligent search within and without, the young man was marched off handcuffed to the next police station, and the priest and parson took their departure together from the sad scene.

When it was noised about in the neighborhood, that a stranger and his wife, and old Mrs. — died all on the same day, and in the same house, hundreds, nay thousands of the neighboring peasantry flocked to the wake. Vague and wonderful were the various reports with regard to the death of these persons. Early on the following day, the priest made his appearance at the scene of death. The bodies were to be interred at a distance of fifteen miles from the place where they lay—the three coffins were placed on a cart (the still-born babe was put in the same coffin with its mother), and proceeded, accompanied by thousands, towards the place of interment. On the road they passed a country chapel belonging to the pious priest, who accompanied the funeral the whole of the way—the procession halted—the coffins were brought into the chapel, and the priest delivered a sermon suited to the occasion—he is an eloquent man, and surely here was a wide field open to him for the display of his mental powers. Of the thousands who heard him, there was not one who did not shed tears plentifully—he concluded by exhorting all to hold fast by the faith of their fathers. He accompanied the funeral until he saw the mother of the renegade and her friends, quietly laid in their parent earth.

It is known that the Dutch obtained their exclusive privilege of trading with the Japanese by consenting to tread under foot the image of Our Lord when each ship landed its cargo on the coast. We learn from the *Revue Catholique de Louvain* that, by the last treaty of the Dutch with the Japanese, this shameful custom has at last been abolished; but all Christian books and rites, as formerly, are strictly forbidden.