

REDMOND O'HANLON.

An Historical Story of the Cromwellian Settlement.

CHAPTER X.

Three days' imprisonment had produced a fearful change in the appearance of Judith Lawson. All life, all motion, all vigor, and nearly all vitality seemed to have departed from her frame.

Her attendant for these three days was the wicked old jailer, Gerald Geraghty. The silence of Judith puzzled the old man at first, then annoyed him, and then disappointed him.

Judith either did not seem to be conscious of his presence, or if her eyes ever by accident met his, it was but to turn them away from him, as if they had fallen upon some inanimate piece of furniture in the room.

What, then, is to be done? or how is she to be aroused from her stupor? or in what way can she be brought back again to think of life—their vain hopes, and their barren pleasures?

"Of myself I cannot do anything with her. My grandson has been in and out of her room also, and she has taken no more notice of him than if he had been a dog; and yet he did his best to attract her attention, by pretending for her sympathy he did not feel.

It was whilst sitting on a chair on the opposite side of the table at which Judith sat, that the old man had indulged in this soliloquy.

"I am," replied Judith, "though I have now lived many years in Ireland, I was born and educated in England. My mother was a Welchwoman, and my father—oh! Heavens!"

"I was taught to abominate Popery," replied Judith, "for I have been directed to believe that it is a profession of faith that is religiously corrupt, and politically dangerous; and also, that it degrades the intellect and enslaves the soul."

"As sure as I am an honest woman, he did," replied the widow Gregg. "How long is the old man Gerald Geraghty known to you?" inquired Judith.

And figures jumbled and mixed together, the loved object in one being, a human demon in the other; and yet both the same, and that same person, her own father! Then came a sense of confusion and distraction, and with it a notion growing hourly stronger, and more perceptible it was, that she, Judith, was going mad; or that, by a sudden stoppage of the blood at her heart, where she fancied she found it sometimes cease from beating; that in an instant she would be dead.

"And thus remained Judith Lawson for three days, but on the fourth day there was a change. On the morning of the fourth day, when Judith, in response to the knocking, and unchaining the bolts on the door, withdrew the bars that protected it inside, there presented itself to her view, not the accustomed and loathsome form of Gerald Geraghty, but that of an old woman, whose snow-white hairs were confined by a close fitting black cloth cap, and whose small, thin wasted figure was fastened in, as it appeared, tightly into a black cloth gown.

"He belted me most undoubtedly to you," observed Judith; "that I am quite sure of; why then should I not believe—as certainly it is my duty to believe—that he belied him to whom my love and honor are due, by the invention of the most horrible story that ever was told?"

"An atrocious lie," chimed in Mrs. Gregg. "And then the throats of wives, daughters, and infants being cut—"

"A most diabolical lie!" roared out Mrs. Gregg, as she jumped up and stamped with her ponderous feet upon the floor. "I have no patience to listen further to such nefarious falsehoods. But, who, my good woman, was said by this vile miscreant to be a chief actor in these iniquities? I should not be surprised if he fathered them on my late blessed husband, of whose precious remains there is no relic left, but the butt-end of a matchlock."

"You have pressed me to eat," said Judith, at last looking up at this terrible old woman; "you have kindly waited upon me. Will you not sit down now and take something yourself?"

"I will do anything that is asked me so civilly," replied the woman, sending herself, and cutting a huge slice of bread, and pouring out a full pitcher of milk; "and I will do it the more readily, when I am asked to do so by one like you, who speaks to me with an English accent. Are you an Englishwoman?"

"I am," replied Judith. "Though I have now lived many years in Ireland, I was born and educated in England. My mother was a Welchwoman, and my father—oh! Heavens!"

"I was taught to abominate Popery," replied Judith, "for I have been directed to believe that it is a profession of faith that is religiously corrupt, and politically dangerous; and also, that it degrades the intellect and enslaves the soul."

My late blessed husband was 'blown clean off the top of the Arms Tower of Dublin Castle, by a cannon ball, and no part of him was ever afterwards discovered but the butt and of his matchlock. Yes, it was that same year, the year of grace 1680, that I first saw the ill-looking countenance of that unwhipped thief, Gerald Geraghty; 'tis, I may say, I now know Gerald Geraghty, for full twenty years. And all the good of him, I have to tell, that it would be hard, very hard, 'twould be impossible, to determine, whether he is a greater rogue, or a greater liar."

"A liar! a liar!" repeated Judith, "as if there was a ray of hope shining in upon her darkened spirit. 'Are you quite sure, that the terrible old man has acquired by his own misconduct that worst of all characters, a notorious liar?'"

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right, I think he said it was because they were Irish Papists. "Ah! ha! I will engage for it that was the very thing he said," sagaciously remarked the widow Gregg. "You are not aware, perhaps that Gerald Geraghty is himself an Irish Papist, and that for the purpose of carrying out the nefarious designs of his faction, he has pretended to conform to our religion, so that whilst he professes Protestantism, he is at heart a Papist; and the sure proof, that he is a hypocrite as well as a liar and a thief is his inventing this horrible story against your father."

"That is the way those Papists have been going on from the beginning. All liars and all thieves, from the first Papist, the sergent who deluded our mother Eve, with a falsehood about an apple tree, down to that most flagrant, money-seeking Papist, Judas Iscariot. He talks of your father murdering women and children. The dear, good, holy man never did any such thing; but what put the lie about him into wicked Gerald Geraghty's head is that he well knows such deeds as he attributes to good Ebenezer Lawson were done by the Irish Papists; that these same Irish Papists, in the year 1651, massacred in one morning one hundred and ten thousand two hundred and fifty-one English Protestants; killing seventy-five thousand three hundred and four persons, whilst they were fast asleep in their beds; knocking the brains out of ten thousand one hundred and one persons whilst they were at their own breakfasts; drowning six thousand eight hundred and nine persons in ponds, rivers, and lakes; burning alive one thousand eight hundred and one persons; cutting the throats of one thousand eight hundred and fifty-seven persons, mostly children, under the age of two years, and orthodox Protestant; whilst the remainder were put to death in various ways, and such only as the diabolical ingenuity of a Papist could suggest."

"It is not possible, at least I hope so, that there is exaggeration in the account you give of the massacres of 1641?" asked Judith.

"Exaggeration!" cried the widow Gregg, surprised. "On the contrary, there is, if anything, an under statement. Did not that marvellous saint and most wonderful convert from Popery, the Rev. Malachy Marplet, travel from parish to parish through Ireland, counting the graves of the victims, and authenticating, in the most satisfactory and edifying manner, every single case of monstrous, merciless, and inhuman massacre perpetrated by the Papists? Besides, were not the bodies of thousands of those who had been drowned seen floating on the rivers for months after the massacre? Nay, is not this fact as notorious as that there is sunshine in June, that in one particular place, I think it was in Athlone, some of the dead, murdered Protestants, were to be seen every Saturday night standing bold upright in the water, and crying out instantiorum voces—'We want to be revenged on the bloody Irish Papists? and are there not cases cited by that lamb of grace, the Rev. Jacob Roundhead, in which it is shewn by a multitude of affidavits, that dead little Protestant children, who had been killed by the Papists and eaten, were heard at night crying around the doors of their carnivorous murderers—'Give us our heads, or the bones itself? The least and smallest of all crimes that a Papist can commit is to tell lies; and be assured that the old rascalion, Gerald Geraghty, was only doing what he thought was a laudable action, when he invented a falsehood, and attributed to your father those deeds of cruelty, which, probably, his own hand had perpetrated, and which Protestants being the victims, his own cruel hand had readily inflicted."

"Do you mean by your father, Ebenezer Lawson, the same man who was in the troop of Captain Edward Ludlow?" asked the old woman.

"I do, I do," answered Judith, pale with fear and agitation.

"Ebenezer Lawson," observed the widow Gregg, "I remember him well, and knew his reputation thoroughly. There was not a more active man, nor a more zealous soldier, in the Cromwellian army. A braver or a better man never handled a matchlock, nor quoted a text from Scripture. Ah! if all the army had been like him in spirit, we should be little troubled now with Papists or a Popish Plot."

"I am," replied Judith. "Though I have now lived many years in Ireland, I was born and educated in England. My mother was a Welchwoman, and my father—oh! Heavens!"

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boy, my grandson, upon the means of ensuring the young woman, and of making the plots of that detestable old man. The boy must ever be on the watch, your eyes know no sleep, and our bodies no rest, until that purpose is secured for which I believe my life has been prolonged.

"The conversation with the widow Gregg had given to Judith Lawson not only refreshed strength of body, but also renewed power of mind. The horrible tale told to her about her father, had weighed down upon her heart and head as if it were a mountain of lead oppressing her to the very earth, and rendering her alike incapable of thought, feeling, and motion. That awful crushing weight had now been removed, and with revived strength, and spirits came back her natural courage and her indomitable resolution.

For three long days she had ceased to think of her incarceration, of its injustice, of the cruel and unprovoked wrong that had been done to her; but now all those sentiments returned to her, and she felt herself to be the same dauntless Judith Lawson who had discharged a musket at the heart of her captor with the intention of slaying him; and again, as on the first night she had entered that abode, which was called a prison, she resolved that if courage and determination could burst her bonds, her captivity must speedily be at an end.

With this view, Judith, for the first time, commenced an examination of the prison in which she had been confined. She wished to ascertain whether it presented any or no facilities for escape. She at once perceived that the chamber and sleeping-room allocated to her use, with the passage leading to them, must occupy the entire floor of what was a circular tower. To that tower light and air were admitted to the sitting-room by a large square window, and to the bed-room by a long narrow slit in the wall, eight inches in length and not more than one inch in breadth.

As she looked through the latticed window of the sitting-room, she perceived that it fronted another window like itself, in a tower about thirty paces distant, and that the two towers were on both sides flanked by connecting walls; and in each of these walls were square windows of the same size, and on a level with the room in which she stood. Beyond this close and narrow space there was no view from the window; and, being desirous to ascertain how the intermediate space below was occupied—by a moat or earth—or to what purposes it was applied, she pushed open the lattice, and looked down into what she at once recognized as a flagged courtyard beneath. This she perceived by a momentary glance, for she was not allowed to take more than a moment in looking beneath her, as the instant her face and person was seen looking out, her ears were saluted by the loud, ferocious, rabid barking of four monstrous bulldogs, that with glaring eyes, and glistening teeth, and open mouths, yelled out in furious rage against her; whilst in the midst of them stood, with malignity in his eye, and a diabolical smile on his lips, the hated old warder of the prison—Gerald Geraghty!

"What was it made the brave-hearted Judith shrank back with terror, as she thus gazed upon the old man and the enraged brutes around him—looking like a demon with a band of imps under his control? She could not account for the sickening, fainting sensations that came over her, and that impelled her, with hurried and trembling hands, to close the casement, and so, if she could, to shut out the noise of the growling beasts beneath, and in so doing to put an end to the fear, the horror, and the afflict that had so unexpectedly come upon her.

"I feel ill, very ill," said Judith in a trembling voice, as she endeavored to answer the old woman. "I have by accident, again seen that terrible old man, who frightened me with the horrid story about my dear father. In looking from that window on the courtyard beneath, I beheld him with four dogs, and it seemed to me—it was a foolish fancy, I know—that he was inciting them to tear me to pieces, and marking me out to them as their destined prey."

"And, no doubt, the wicked old villain would do so, if he had the power and the opportunity," replied Mrs. Gregg. "It is the way with him, and all his sort and creed, to use poor Englishwomen. They would slaughter us all if they could."

"But what have I done to this old man that I should be so hated by him?" asked Judith. "I never did to him or his the slightest harm; on the contrary, I never set a poor Irish person I did not aid to the best of my power, and I did this without ever considering what particular form of faith any one of them professed."

me any satisfaction, and yet he has done so. I have had the infinite pleasure of seeing him beating that imp of the devil, his grandson; a youthful miscreant who has the wit of Belzebub, with the strength and agility of a monkey, to perform any prank or mischief that his own bad disposition, or the malice of others, may suggest to him. Ha! ha! it did my heart good to see the old scoundrel fling him; I did not think the vile old scoundrel had so much strength left; but he knocked the young villain down clean-down five times, with as many blows of his staff. The imp of the devil had almost escaped from his hands, but covered with blood and bruises. What a pity old Gerald did not knock the brains out of the young miscreant; or that the young miscreant had not the spirit to turn against his grandfather, and slay him! Oh! it is a fine thing to see these Irish wretches quarrelling with each other!"

Judith did not interrupt the discourse of Mrs. Gregg by a single observation, for so absorbed was she in the contemplation of her own strange position, and with vague dreams of effecting her escape from it, that she scarcely comprehended the purport of Mrs. Gregg's observation. All she gleaned from it was the fact, that there existed, in connection with her prison, another person, of whom she had never heard before, and that the person so referred to was the grandson of Geraghty."

"So! said Judith, 'the wicked old man has a grandson; I did not know that until now. Do you know the grandson? what age is he?'"

"The grandson," replied Mrs. Gregg, "is I should think above seventeen, but does not look so; he is in the prime of his growth, to be more than ten or twelve years of age. I think it is seven years since I first saw him, and he is, in appearance, the same to-day that he was then. I never knew and I never heard any good of him. On the contrary, he was always doing mischief, and, therefore, always a prime favorite with his grandfather. I do not think it is in the nature of the boy to perform one act of virtue; and I do not believe that his grandfather would beat him unless he had discovered the lad doing good. I am quite puzzled to know what can be the cause of quarrel, and will, therefore, at once leave you, and try and unravel this, to me, most marvellous and unlooked for event; for I repeat to you, such a detestable set are these Irish Papists, that a young person amongst them would never, of his own accord, do much as think of doing good, and that an old person amongst them would never do anything but mischief, in actual doing or in thinking of doing, something which a truly pious English person would either laud or approve of."

"And with this observation, Abigail Gregg, who always regarded herself as a model of charity," left the apartment with the intention of descending to the hall of Brass Castle.

Mrs. Gregg quitted the room in which Judith sat, and carefully closed the door of the apartment behind her; but in the passage leading from the chamber to the outward door, from which the stairs descended, she met full front the watchful janitor, Gerald Geraghty, who, with a broad grin on his face, and a bunch of keys in his hand, thus saluted the widow:—"The top of the morning to you, widow! Might I take the liberty of asking you where you are off to in such a hurry; or has the Doctor told you that a promenade would be good for your precious health?"

The widow Gregg's gigantic eyes, in her large unshiny head, flashed with indignation as these questions were put, in a bawling tone, to her by old Geraghty.

"I would have been a curious study for the physiognomist to have contemplated the faces and figures of these two old malevolent individuals, as they gazed with intense hatred and contempt for each other, and neither caring to conceal the abomination they entertained. Mutually inimical, yet there was a common resemblance between the two, for each nurtured in the heart an enmity against unoffending individuals, races, or religions, and each sought to disguise from himself and herself an innate wickedness of disposition by pretending that its indulgence was but resentment or disgust, felt on account of the offensiveness of others. It was English bigotry, face to face with, and frowning at Irish prejudice; and never, perhaps, were unjust national prejudices more appropriately represented than when they were thus personified in senility without love, or honor, or respect, fanaticism, and uncharitableness, and spite on the one side; passion, vindictiveness, suspicion, and insatiable hate, with unforbearing revenge, upon the other.

"I'm sorry to find we're not on speaking terms, widow Gregg," said Geraghty. "Is this your gratitude to me for making interest with the Government to get you to wait on that beautiful young lady, who has pockets full of gold to give away to anybody she takes a fancy to?"

"What I want to know, Mr. Geraghty, from you is—how came you in this passage? what business have you here?" asked Mrs. Gregg.

"Indeed, very little business of my own, replied Geraghty; "but that I'm greatly afraid politeness will be the death of me. I just came into this passage to save your precious old knuckles being tattered to pieces beating at that door, if you wanted to go down stairs; first, because nobody will mind your knocking, and next, because there are positive orders that so long as the young lady in that room remains there, you will have to stay along with her."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Gregg, bursting out into a fit of rage—"what do you mean, you old thief of the world?"

"Manners, widow, if you please," replied Geraghty. "Old thief of the world? Why, if you are going out, widow, you need not be in such a hurry as to leave your name and title behind you."

"Why, you old thief of the world," repeated Mrs. Gregg, "do you mean to say I am not to come in and go out of this place as I please?"

"As to coming in here; that was your own act, widow," replied Geraghty; "your own act, of your own free will; but as to going out, that depends upon those who hold the keys, and may the worst of bad luck overtake me—that is, may I be married to you before I die, but out of this prison you don't stir a single inch as long as I'm warder. And as he said this, he clenched his knuckles in his withered hands. "Or rather, I should say," he added—"for the Lord forbid you were to stay here for ever—as long as the lady in that room is detained a prisoner."

(To be continued.)

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