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THE KNIGHT OF THE SHEEP.

(Concluded.)

CHAPTER II.

On the following morning, in the presence of his household, Mr. Taafe made a present to his two eldest sons of one hundred pounds each, and was induced to bestow the same sum on Garret, although he by no means thought he deserved it after disgracing him as he had done before his guests. He signified to the young men at the same time, that he gave them the money as a free gift, to lay out in any way they pleased, and that he never should ask them to repay it.

After breakfast, the old knight, as usual, went to take a few turns in the garden.

"Well, Jerry," said he, when the steward had joined him according to his orders; "well, Jerry, Garret is no genius."

A groan from Jerry seemed to announce his acquiescence in this decision. He did not, however, resign all hope.

"With submission to your honor," said he, "I wouldn't call that a fair trial of a man's parts. A man mightn't be able to answer a little *cran* o' that kind, an' to have more sense for all than those that would. Wait a while until you'll see what use he'll make o' the hundred pounds, an' that'll show his sense better than all the riddles in Europe."

Mr. Taafe acknowledged that Jerry's proposition was but reasonable; and, accordingly, at the end of a twelvemonth, he called his three sons before him, and examined them one after another.

"Well, Shamus," said he, "what did you do with your hundred pounds?"

"I bought stock with it, father."

"Very good. And you, Guillaum?"

"I laid it out, father, in the interest of a little farm westwards."

"Very well managed again. Well, Garret, let us hear what you did with the hundred pounds."

"I spent it, father," said Garret.

"Spent it! Is it the whole hundred pounds?"

"Sure, I thought you told us we might lay it out as we liked, sir?"

"Is that the reason you should be such a prodigal as to waste the whole of it in a year?—Well, hear to me, now, the three o' ye, and listen to the reason why I put ye to these trials. I'm an old man, my children; my hair is white on my head, an' it's time for me to think of turning the few days that are left me to the best account. I wish to separate myself from the world before the world separates itself from me. For this cause I had resolved, these six months back, to give up all my property to ye three that are young an' hearty, an' to keep nothing for myself but a bed under my old roof, an' a sate at the table an' by the fire-place, an' so to end my old days in peace an' quiet. To you, Shamus, I meant to give the dairy-farm up in the mountains; the Corcasses and all the meadowing to you, Guillaum; and for you, Garret, I had the best of the whole—that is, the house we're living in, and the farm belonging to it. But for what would I give it to you, after what you just told me? Is it to make ducks and drakes of it, as you did o' the hundred pounds? Here, Garret," said he, going to a corner of the room and bringing out a small bag and a long hazel stick; "here's the legacy I have to leave you—that, an' the king's high road, an' my liberty to go wherever it best pleases you. Hard enough I earned that hundred pounds that you spent so easily. And as for the farm I meant to give you, I give it to these two boys, an' my blessing along with it, since 'tis they that know how to take of it."

At this speech the two elder sons cast themselves at their father's feet with tears of gratitude.

"Yes," said he, "my dear boys, I'm rewarded for the pains I ever took with ye, to make ye industrious, and thrifty, and everything that way. I'm satisfied, under Heaven, that all will go right with ye; but as for this boy, I have nothing to say to him. Better for me I never saw his face."

Poor Garret turned aside his head, but he made no attempt to excuse himself, nor to obtain any favor from his rigid father. After wishing them all a timid farewell, which was but slightly returned, he took the bag and staff, and went about his business.

His departure seemed to give little pain to his relatives. They lived merrily and prosperously, and even the old knight himself showed no anxiety to know what had become of Garret. In the meantime, the two elder sons got married; and Mr. Taafe, in the course of a few years, had the satisfaction to see his grandchildren seated on his knee.

We are often widely mistaken in our estimate of generosity. It may appear a very noble thing to bestow largely; but, before we give it the praise of generosity, we must be sure that the motive is as good as the deed. Mr. Taafe be-

gan, in the course of time, to show that his views in bestowing his property on his two sons were not wholly free from selfishness. They found it harder to please him now that they were masters of all, than when they were wholly dependent on his will. His jealousies and murmurs were interminable. There was no providing against them beforehand, nor any allaying them when they did arise. The consequence was, the young men, who never really felt anything like the gratitude they had professed, began to consider the task of pleasing him altogether burdensome. In this feeling they were encouraged by their wives, who never ceased murmuring at the cost and trouble of entertaining him.

Accordingly, one night while the aged knight was murmuring at some inattention which was shown him at table, Shamus and Guillaum Taafe walked into the room, determined to put an end for ever to his complaints.

"I'd like to know what would please you?" exclaimed Shamus. "I suppose you won't stop until you'll take house and all from us, an' turn us out, as you did Garret, to beg from doore to doore?"

"If I did itself, Shamus," said the knight, looking at him for some moments with surprise, "I'd get no more than I gave."

"What good was your giving it," cried Guillaum, "when you won't let us enjoy it with a moment's comfort?"

"Do you talk that way to me, too, Guillaum? If it was poor Garret I had, he wouldn't use me so."

"Great thanks he got from you for any good that was in him," cried one of the women.

"Let him take his stick and pack out to look for Garret," said the second woman, "since he is so fond of him."

The old knight turned and looked at the women.

"I don't wonder," said he, "at anything I'd hear ye say. You never yet heard of anything great or good, or for the public advantage, that a woman would have a hand in—only mischief always. If you ask who made such a road, or who built such a bridge, or wrote such a great history, or did any other good action o' the kind, I'll engage 'tis seldom you'll hear that it is a woman done it; but if you ask who is that set such and such a pair fightin', or who is that caused such a *jewel*, or who is that let out such a secret, or ran down such a man's character, or occasioned such a war, or brought such a man to the gallows, or caused diversion in such a family, or anything o' that kind, then, I'll engage, you'll hear that a woman had some call to it. We needn't have recourse to history to know ye'r doins. 'Tis under our eyes. 'Twas the likes o' ye two that burned Throy, an' made the King o' Leinster rebel again' Brian Boru."

At this the two women pulled the caps off their heads, and set up such a screaming and shrieking as might be heard from thence to Cork. "Oh, murder! murder!" says one of them, "was it for this I married you, to be compared to people o' that kind?"

"What reason has he to me," cried the other, "that he'd compare me to them that would rebel again' Brian Boru? Would I rebel again' Brian, Shamus, a' ragal?"

"Don't heed him, a-vourneen, he's an old man."

"Oh, vo! vo! if ever I thought the likes o' that would be said o' me, that I'd rebel again' Brian Boru!"

"There's no use in talking, Guillaum," cried the second, who probably took the allusion to the fate of Troy as a slight on her own personal attractions; "there's no use in talkin, but I never'll stay a day under your roof with anybody that would say I'd burn Throy. Does he forget that ever he had a mother himself? Ah, 'tis a bad apple, that's what it is, that despises the three it sprung from."

"Well, I'll tell you what it is, now," said the eldest son, "since 'tis come to that with you, that you won't let the women alone, I won't put up with any more from you. I believe, if I didn't show you the outside o' the doore, you'd show it to me before long. There, now, the world is free to you to look out for people that'll please you better, since you say we can't do it."

"A, Shamus, agra," said the old knight, looking at his son with astonishment; "is that my thanks after all?"

"Your thanks for what?" cried Guillaum; "is it for plasin' your own fancy? or for makin' our lives miserable ever since, an' to give crossness to the women?"

"Let him go look for Garret, now," cried one of the women, "an' see whether they'll agree better than they did before."

"Ah—Shamus—Guillaum—a chree," said the poor old man, trembling with terror at sight of the open door, "let ye have it as ye will; I am sorry for what I said, a'ra gal! Don't turn me out on the high road in my old days! I'll engage, I never'll open my mouth again' one o' ye again the longest day I live. A, Shamus, a-ric,

it isn't long I have to stay wid ye. Your own hair will be as white as mine yet, please God, an' 'twouldn't be wishin' to you then for a dale that you showed any disrespect to mine."

His entreaties, however, were all to no purpose. They turned him out, and made fast the door behind him.

Imagine an old man of sixty and upwards turned out on the high road on a cold and rainy night, the north wind beating on his feeble breast, and without the prospect of relief before him.—For a time he could not believe that the occurrence was real; and it was only when he felt the rain already penetrating through his thin dress that he became convinced it was but too true.

"Well," said the old man, lifting up his hands as he crept out on the high road, "is this what all the teaching come to! Is this the cleverness an' the learning? Well, if it was to do again! No matter. They say there's two bad pays in the world—the man that pays beforehand, an' the man that doesn't pay at all. In like manner, there's two kinds of people that wrong their lawful heirs—those that give them their inheritance before death, and those that will it away from them after. What'll I do now at all? or where'll I turn to? a poor old man o' my kind that isn't able to do a stroke o' work if I was ever so faint! An' the night gettin' worse an' worse?—Easy!—Isn't that a light I see westwards? There's no one, surely, except an unnatural son or daughter that would refuse to give an old man shelter on such a night as this. I'll see if all men's hearts are as hard as my two sons'."

He went to the house, which was situated at the distance of a quarter of a mile from that which he so lately looked on as his own. As he tottered along the dark and miry *boheen* which led to the cottage door, the barking of a dog inside aroused the attention of the inmates. Being already in bed, however, before he had arrived there, none of them were very willing to give admission to a stranger.

"Who's there?" cried the man of the house, as the old knight knocked timidly at the door.—"Do you think we have nothing else to do at this time o' night but to be gettin' up an' openin' the doore to every stroller that goes the road?"

"Ah! if you knew who it was you had there," said the knight, "you wouldn't be so slow of openin' the doore."

"Who is it I have there, then?"

"The Knight of the Sheep."

"The Knight of the Sheep! Oh, you born villian! 'Twas your son Shamus that cheated me out o' thirty good pounds by a horse he sold me at the fair o' Killeedy—an animal that wasn't worth five! Go along this minute with you; or if you make me get up, 'tis to give you something that you wouldn't bargain for."

The poor man hurried away from the door, fearing that the farmer would be but too ready to put his threat into execution. The night was growing worse and worse. He knocked at another door; but the proprietor of this in like manner had suffered to the extreme cleverness of Guillaum Taafe, and refused to give him shelter.

The whole night was spent in going from door to door, and finding in every place where he applied that the great ability of his two sons had been beforehand with him in getting a bad name for the whole family. At last, as the morning began to dawn, he found himself unable to proceed further, and was obliged to lie down in a little paddock close to a very handsome farm-house. Here the coldness of the morning air and the keenness of his grief at the recollection of his children's ingratitude had such an effect upon him that he swooned away, and lay for a long time insensible upon the grass. In this condition he was found by the people of the house, who soon after came out to look after the bounds and do their usual farming work. They had the humanity to take him into the house, and to put him into a warm bed, where they used all proper means for his recovery.

When he had come to himself, they asked him who he was, and how he had fallen into so unhappy a condition. For a time the old knight was afraid to answer, lest these charitable people, like so many others, might have been at one time sufferers to the rogery of his two eldest sons, and thus be tempted to repent of their kindness the instant they had heard on whom it had been bestowed. However, fearing lest they should accuse him of duplicity in case they might afterwards learn the truth, he at length confessed his name.

"Knight of the Sheep!" exclaimed the woman of the house, with a look of the utmost surprise and joy.

"Oh, Tom, Tom!" she continued, calling out to her husband, who was in another room. "A, come here, ashore, until you see Mither Taafe, the father o' young Masther Garret, the darlin' that saved us all from ruin."

The man of the house came in as fast as he could run.

"Are you Garret Taafe's father?" said he, looking surprised at the old knight.

"I had a son of that name," said Mr. Taafe, "though all I know of him now is, that I used him worse than I would if it was to happen again."

"Well, then," said the farmer, "my blessing on that day that ever you set foot within these doores. The rose in May was never half so welcome, an' I'm better pleased than I'll tell you, that I have you under my roof."

"I'm obliged to you," said the knight, "but what's the reason o' that?"

"Your son Garret," replied the man, "of a day when every whole ha'p'orth we had in the world was going to be canted for the rent, put a hand in his pocket an' lent us thirty pounds till we'd be able to pay him again, an' we not knowin' who in the world he was, nor he us, I'm sure. It was only a long time after that we found it out by others in various parts that he had served in like manner, and they told us who he was.—We never seen him since; but I'm sure it would be the joyful day to us that we'd see him coming back to get his thirty pounds."

When the old knight heard this, he felt as a somebody was running him through with a sword. "And this," said he, "was the way poor Garret spent the hundred pounds! Oh, murder! murder! my poor boy, what had I to do at all, to go turn you adrift as I done, for no reason! I took the wrong for the right, an' the right for the wrong! No matter! That's the way the whole world is blinded. That's the way death will show us the differ of many a thing. O murder! Garret! Garret! What'll I do at all with the thoughts of it! An' them two villians that I gave it all to, an' that turned me out after in my old days, as I done by you! No matter."

He turned into the wall for fear the people would hear him groaning; but the remorse, added to all his other sufferings, had almost killed him.

In a little time the old knight began to recover something of his former strength under the care of his new acquaintances, who continued to show him the most devoted attention. One morning the farmer came into his room with a large purse full of gold in his hand, and said:

"I told you, sir, I owed your son thirty pounds; an' since he's not comin' to ax for it, you're heartily welcome to the use of it until he does, an' I'm sure he wouldn't wish to see it better employed."

"No, no," replied Mr. Taafe, "I'll not take the money from you; but I'll borrow the whole purse for a week, an' at the end o' that time I'll return it safe to you."

The farmer lent him the purse, and the knight waited for a fine day, when he set off again in the morning, and took the road leading to the dwelling from which he had been expelled. It was noon, and the sun was shining bright when he arrived upon the little lawn before the door.—Sitting down in the sunshine by the kitchen-garden wall, he began counting the gold, and arranging it in a number of little heaps, so that it had a most imposing effect. While he was thus occupied, one of his young daughters-in-law—the same whose beauty had drawn upon her the unhappy allusion to the mischief-making spouse of Menelaus—happened to make her appearance at the front door, and looking around, saw the old knight in the act of counting his gold in the sunshine. Overwhelmed with astonishment, she ran to her husband, and told him what she had seen.

"Nonsense, woman!" said Shamus; "you don't mean to persuade me to a thing o' that kind."

"Very well," replied the woman, "I'm sure, if you don't believe me, 'tis asy for ye all to go an' see ye'r selves."

So they all went, and peeping through the little window one after another, were dazzled by the sight of so much gold.

"You done very wrong, Shamus," said Guillaum, "ever to turn out the old father as you done. See, now, what we all lost by it. That's a part o' the money he laid by from year to year, an' we never'll see a penny o' it."

At this they all felt the greatest remorse for the manner in which they had acted to the old man. However, they were not so much discouraged but that some of them ventured to approach and salute him. On seeing them draw nigh, he hastily concealed the gold and returned their greeting with an appearance of displeasure. It was by much persuasion, and after many assurances of their regret for what had passed, that he consented once more to come and take up his abode beneath their roof, desiring at the same time that an ass and cart might be sent to the farmer's for a strong box which he had left there.

At the mention of a *strong box*, it may easily be imagined what were the sensations of his hearers. The ass and cart were procured without delay, and, before evening, those grateful children had the satisfaction to behold a heavy box, of very promising dimensions, deposited in a corner of the small chamber which was to be reserved for the future use of their aged parent.

In the meanwhile, nothing could exceed the

attention which he now received from the young people. They seemed only unhappy when not occupied in contributing in some way to his comfort, and perceiving his remorse for the manner in which Garret had been treated, used all the means in their power to discover whether he had gone. But it is not always in this life that one false step can be retraced. The old knight was not destined to see his son again, and his grief at this disappointment had no slight effect in aggravating the infirmities of his old age.

At length, perceiving that he was near his end, he called his sons and daughters to his bedside, and addressed them in the following words:—

"Whatever cause I had once to complain of ye, Shamus and Guillaum, that's all past and gone now, and it is right that I should leave you some little remembrance for all the trouble I gave you since my comin' home. Do you see that chest there?"

"Ah, father! what chest?" cried the sons.—"Don't be talkin' of it for a chest."

"Well, my good boys," said the knight, "my will is in that chest, so I need tell ye no more."

"Don't speak of it," said Shamus, "for, as the Latin says:—

Non possidentem multa Recte beatum.

Only as you're talkin' of it at all for a chest, where's the key, father?"

"Ah, Shamus!" said the knight, "you were always great at the Latin. The key is in my waistcoat pocket."

Soon after he expired. The two sons, impatient to inspect their treasure, could hardly wait until the old man ceased to breathe. While Shamus unlocked the box, Guillaum remained to keep the door fast.

"Well, Shamus," said his brother, "what do you find there?"

"A parcel of stones, Guillaum!"

"Nonsense, man! try what's under 'em."

Shamus complied, and found at the bottom of the box a rope with a running noose at the end, and a scroll of paper, from which Shamus read the following sentence aloud, for the information of his brother:—

The last Will and Testament of Bryan Taafe, commonly called The Knight of the Sheep.

Inprimis. To my two sons, Shamus and Guillaum, I bequeath the whole of the limestones contained in this box, in return for their disinterested love and care of me ever since the day when they saw me counting the gold near the kitchen-garden.

Item. I bequeath the rope herein contained for any father to hang himself, who is so foolish as to give away his property to his heirs before his death.

"Well, Shamus," said Guillaum, "the poor father laid out a dale on our education, but I declare all the tainin' he ever gave us was nothing to that."

PERSECUTION OF PRIESTS.

(From the Tablet.)

The House of Commons has resolved that the issue of the writs for Galway and for Mayo shall be suspended, and that the Attorney-General of Ireland shall be instructed to prosecute criminally the Rev. Peter Conway and the Rev. Luke Ryan for the newly-created offence of exercising undue influence by spiritual intimidation.

As the House decided on the prosecution by majorities of 124 and 133, we may assume that they were little influenced by the warnings of Mr. Bowyer that "by proceeding on this doubtful evidence, on these doubtful facts, and still more doubtful law, they would excite the just indignation of the people of Ireland." Perhaps, if the Whigs, indeed, were out of office, such a thing would be certain to raise a perfect storm of the most generous indignation. But the Whigs are in office, and, of late days, there have been so many things calculated to excite the just indignation of the people of Ireland, which have been borne with remarkable serenity, that our notions of what would excite the indignation of the people of Ireland have become rather vague. There was a time when we should have expected that the insult to Catholics contained in the Oath's Bill would have caused indignation, and that the conduct of twenty-five Catholic members who abstained from voting against it would have made that indignation show itself. There was a time when we think the men of Limerick would have expressed some surprise if their member voted for such a Bill as Mr. Vere voted for, and when a "Voice from Ennis" would have called its member to account for voting for a Divorce Bill, even as Mr. J. D. Fitzgerald just has done. The petition of Mr. George Gore Ousely Higgins, a slanderous libel on the Bishops and Priests of the Irish people, would, we think, have been noticed differently once upon a time, and the contumelious treatment of the demands of the Irish tenant would in other days, we think, have been met in a very different manner. It was once said by