

THE CATHOLIC RECORD.

A VICTIM TO THE SEAL OF CONFESSION.

A TRUE STORY BY THE REV. JOSEPH SPILLMAN, S. J. CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAYOR ARRIVES ON THE SCENE.

The three officials wended their way in silence to the ancient Convent. They were followed by the inn-keeper and the policeman, the latter carrying a lantern. As they turned out of the village street, and came in sight of the old building, they noticed that the rooms inhabited by the priest were lighted up. "Our friend is still up, at any rate," remarked the mayor with a sneer. "That is very surprising, that he should be disturbed on account of indisposition."

"He is restless enough too," added the Notary. "One can see his shadow on the window as he paced up and down before the lamp."

"That looks as if he was in a state of agitation or excitement. Do you think Susan may have gone to him after all, and apprised him of the old lady's disappearance?" said the mayor.

"I hardly think so. The old woman would not adventure herself in this gloomy place so late as this—it must be close upon eleven—for any consideration," replied the innkeeper.

"Well, let us go on. How are we to get in? Must we ring the bell? I confess I had rather have taken his Reverence by surprise," said the mayor.

"I have Loner's keys," Carillon answered; and in a moment the old gate swung back on its hinges.

When, without finishing his confession Loner hurried away out of Father Montmoulin's presence, the latter could for a time scarcely control his agitation. Could it be possible that Mrs. Blanchard was murdered! That her body at that moment lay in the room next the sacristy! And the assassin making his escape with his booty, he being powerless to prevent him! He could not even make any use of the revelation made to him in the villain's confession. But was it really a confession? Yes, most certainly so. The man had not the least disposition to confess, and had accused himself to him, as Christ's representative, of the crime he had committed. To make assurance doubly sure the priest took Lehmkuhl's Moral Theology from his bookshelves and read through the chapter on the seal of confession. There was no possible doubt about it; he had acquired the knowledge *sub sigillo*, and he was bound to secrecy whatever the consequences might be.

"My God!" he said to himself, "they may even take me for the murderer. But no, Thou wouldst not lay upon me so terrible a trial. There is nobody who would believe me capable of such a deed. And yet, even if suspicion rested upon me, I dare not openly lay in self defence, I must sacrifice my reputation, my life, rather than utter a word, as I did yesterday from the pulpit! O my God, let this chalice pass from me! I do not ask this for my own sake alone, although I cannot deny that personally I should feel such a trial most acutely; I ask it for my poor mother's sake, for such a blow would be her death; I ask it too for the sake of my flock, for the sake of the Catholic Church, the honor of which would be brought on it, the terrible scandal that would be given through me to many weak souls, if they saw a priest accused of murder! No, it is impossible; such a thing could not be; my excited imagination conjures up these horrible contingencies. The holy Mother of God will take me under her protection!"

Father Montmoulin, whilst uttering these words had cast himself on his knees upon the *prie die*, and raised his hands in supplication to his crucified Redeemer and the Mother of Dolours. After that he took his rosary, and walked up and down the room for some time, saying it. Feeling more composed he was deliberating whether he should retire to rest, although sleep was out of the question, when steps were heard in the corridor, and there was a loud knock at his door.

On his answering "Come in," the town clerk, with the mayor and notary at his heels, entered the apartment. They had altered their first plan, and decided to present themselves altogether, to observe the effect produced upon the clergyman, whom they hated for the sake of his office, by this unexpected visit.

Although they did not attach the slightest suspicion to him, yet they thought, if a crime had been committed he might be in some way mixed up in it, and they were determined to make matters as unpleasant for him as possible. "Whether he shows signs of alarm or no," said the mayor, "it will in any case give us a pretext for instituting a judicial inquiry and searching the house."

Father Montmoulin was not alarmed, at any rate he showed no outward sign of trepidation, when the three officials entered his room at so late an hour. In fact he seemed quite prepared for their coming; the involuntary twitching of his mouth betokened grief rather than astonishment, and he cast a quick glance at the crucifix, as if to implore assistance and support in this crucial hour. He was in fact, so poor an adept at dissimulation, that had he feigned surprise the expression of pathetic resignation upon his countenance could not fail to strike the authorities on their entrance.

"This late visit on our part does not appear to be wholly unexpected by you," the mayor began. "You are perhaps cognisant of the unpleasant duty which compels us to intrude upon you at this unusual hour?"

The good clergyman felt extremely embarrassed. He must not disclose his knowledge of the crime, and his manner betrayed that he had something to conceal. He changed color, and stammered out: "I really am not aware—I cannot tell what brings you here at this hour, gentlemen. What is there that I can do for you?"

The town clerk was going to ask him whether he knew what had become of

his sister, when the mayor stopped him. "One moment," he said. Then addressing Father Montmoulin, he continued: "So you really cannot guess the object of our coming, the question we have come to ask? Yet you did not appear in the least surprised to see us at this unaccustomed hour. At any rate that was the impression made on me—and on you too?" he added looking from one to the other of his companions. They both notified their assent; and the speaker proceeded: "One thing more, if you please; we were told that you were unwell, that you had missed your servant, saying you wanted rest, and did not wish to be disturbed this evening, and yet we find you at 11 o'clock up and dressed. How do you explain this?"

"I was lying down all the afternoon, so I do not feel sleepy now," replied the priest, who by this time had pilled himself together. "I ought rather to ask the object of these questions? I seem to am to undergo an examination."

The three officials exchanged glances. Then the mayor said to the town-clerk: "Since this gentleman cannot—or will not—divine our errand, perhaps you will have the goodness to inform him of it, since the matter concerns you most closely."

The town clerk, thus invited, explained, in no very gentle voice, that his sister had not come home all day long. He was informed that she had gone to fetch a large sum of money from the priest, and he feared something had happened to her. It was his duty to make inquiries about her, and he had come to him in the first place, as apparently he was the last person who had seen the missing individual.

Again Father Montmoulin cast an agonized glance at the crucifix. This action was not lost on his interlocutors. He then answered: "Mrs. Blanchard certainly was here this morning, between 10 and 11. If any misfortune has befallen her, I have additional grounds for deploring it, as I gave her all the money that had been collected by St. Joseph's guild to take away with her."

"I cannot help remarking upon the extraordinary composure with which you receive the tidings of Mrs. Blanchard's disappearance. It would be quite inexplicable but for the supposition that you had already heard it from another quarter, though you denied having done so just now. Who was your informant?" demanded the mayor.

"No one. I know nothing at all about it," was the answer.

"It is very difficult to believe that. You acknowledge that Mrs. Blanchard was with you this morning between 10 and 11. Where did she go afterwards?"

"She said that she was going home."

"Then she never reached home. Nor has she since been seen anywhere or by anyone—a most extraordinary thing! It is very unlikely that she would go in any other direction with all that money about her. Something must have happened to her, in this convent."

"I really can throw no light on her disappearance. I counted out £480 to her in this very room."

"Four hundred and eighty pounds!" all the three men exclaimed in one breath. "The idea of confiding such a sum as that to the charge of a feeble old woman! You must be held responsible of that sum. You actually let her put all that money in her pocket?" inquired the mayor.

"She put it into the basket she carried on her arm, £320 in notes, the rest part in gold, part in silver," Father Montmoulin replied.

"I never dreamt of any danger for her in broad daylight, such a short distance as it is from here to her house."

"Surely you accompanied the old lady to the gate, so you are in a position to swear that she left the convent in safety with the money?" asked the mayor.

Father Montmoulin shrugged his shoulders. "I can only swear that the good lady left this room in perfect health with the money in her basket. I much regret now, that I did not go down to the gate with her; I wanted to, but she would not allow me to accompany her, because I had a cold upon me."

"I repeat, that if this sum of money is really lost, you will be held answerable for it on account of your culpable negligence. This is a fresh, and a striking instance of how utterly careless the clergy are in regard to moneys collected for the poor, the disposing of which ought to be in the hands of the municipal authorities. The money belonged to the poor, although it consisted of voluntary donations, and you, sir, will have to answer for it." Well pleased with himself for having given this turn to the matter in question, the mayor continued: "Then you have not the least suspicion as to what may have befallen Mrs. Blanchard?"

The priest, having only heard in the confessional of the tragic fate of the unhappy lady, shook his head, and answered: "I did not see her again from the time she left this room."

"Well, gentlemen," resumed the mayor, addressing his companions, "since his Reverence either cannot or will not give us any information as to the whereabouts of the missing lady, although she seems to have disappeared under this very roof, we must proceed to search the house. Do you not agree with me?"

"Decidedly," said the one.

"Unhesitatingly," said the other.

"Will you accompany us through the house, sir?" the mayor said to Father Montmoulin.

"I beg you will excuse me. I am feeling very unwell," he replied not a little embarrassed and disconcerted by the mayor's peremptory manner.

"It strikes me as a very strange thing," replied that official, "that you will not join us in our endeavor to clear up the mystery as speedily as possible, the discharge of our duty. Take the lamp," he said to the town-clerk, "and perhaps this reverend gentleman will be so obliging as to hold a candle for us, even if he declines accompanying us on our

tour of investigation in the house he occupies."

Father Montmoulin saw too late that he had made a fatal mistake. Undoubtedly, had he been ignorant of the fate of his friend, he would have been the foremost, to search everywhere for her, lamp in hand. The unconquerable spirit that seized upon him at the idea of seeing the corpse which he knew to be lying in the second sacristy, had prompted his refusal to comply with the mayor's invitation. He tried now to make good his error, by saying, as he took up the lamp: "I will go with you. Far be it from me to put any obstacle in the way of your research. I beg pardon if I showed a little irritability at your somewhat brusque mode of proceeding, which the excitement of the moment rendered excusable. Will you commence with my bedchamber?"

"I see no occasion for that at present," replied the mayor, partly provoked by Father Montmoulin's last speech. "We will first of all look through the passages and staircases which lead from the door of your room to the gate of the Convent, and through which the missing lady must have passed on the way back to her home."

TO BE CONTINUED.

A LESSON IN ECONOMY.

JESSIE HAD TO LEARN THAT RICHARD WAS ONLY SAYING.

The mother was speaking. "He's near, is Richard?"

"Only Savin's mother."

"Savin, is it? When I was a gal I wouldn't ha' looked at a chap that was a ready-handed wi' t' brass. When yo'r feyther and me was courtin' it was out to Barthelmy for t' wakes at Whitson, a jaunt to Blackpool for the August holidays, me an' other lassies, in and other lads. The young folks is a poor lot now. Them was days."

"Yes," said Jessie enviously; "the wage was better then."

"What's t' wage got to do wi' it? If a chap's near he's near. Richard's earnin' thirty shillin', if he's earnin' a bob."

"Dick says," began Jessie hesitatingly, "that he doesn't want his wife to work."

"An' why shouldn't she work? Wark never killed no one yet. Luk at me—litty come Easter, all my lads out t' th' wark, and me at the washtub every Monday reg-lar. Earn and spend, I says—earn and spend. The Lord will provide."

Mrs. Alderson brought her arm down on the table with a sounding bang, and her daughter, who might not come near the fire because it was ironing night, shivered by the window, where there was a crack in the woodwork. The provision in the Alderson household had always been of the scantiest. Jessie had known what it was to go ill in and other lads. She was a delicate-looking girl, the youngest of seven.

There had never been any prosperous times at home in her day, and she had worked in the mill since she was fourteen. She was twenty now, and each winter it grew harder to turn out in the dark of the morning to face the keen wind from the river—to start her boom with fingers numb and chilled. But she was young and other girls had been taken out to the theater, and though the Christmas holidays were over, Dick had never asked her to go once.

"I wouldn't ha' minded so much," she said now, with something like a sob in her throat; but Martha says he tuk 'er last year."

"Ay, an' will agen," said her mother. "Martha Cranfield's uncle can leave 'er a tidy bit."

It was the last straw. Jessie threw down her sewing, and reaching her shawl from its peg, she wound it about her head.

"I'm going out," she said. "The street is better than this. There's the shops there—something to look at: there ain't nothing here."

The door closed behind her with a bang. Mrs. Alderson looked at it with mild astonishment.

"Lor' bless me," she said, "what tantrums! An' all because I giv her a bit of advice. Gels all knows better nor their mothers today. Men's all alike—near or spendin'. What you get's just luck. A near man 'ull bury you 'andsome, an' grudge yo' yo'r bit while yo'r alive."

She was a hard-featured woman, accustomed to the give and take of the world. She had no idea that she had sown the seed of discontent in a girl's heart. Jessie was always peck on and fanciful, and she was that set on Dick Liversedge that there was no arguing with her. Dick was all right and a poor, mild sort, that hadn't got a fling in him. The dead-and-gone Alderson, who had come home drunk regularly every Saturday night, had been different to that. Everyone has their own standard. Miriam Alderson would have chosen a son-in-law of another pattern.

But Jessie had chosen for herself, and now, walking up and down Fish-gate staring at the hats in the shop windows, she had told herself that she had chosen badly. Her mother was right. Dick was "near," and Martha Cranfield, his cousin, who had been after him for years, would have a fortune. All Preston knew that. There were houses in Broad street, a bit of money in the bank. Jessie stared at a hat with a rose in it, and failed to see its charms through her tears.

"Let him 'ave 'er," she said to herself. "I don't want him if he don't want me."

She turned suddenly. Some one had thrust his hand through her arm. Dick Liversedge was looking at the hats, too.

"Cheerin' one for the weddin', lass? What's your fancy, now?"

"What's yours," said Jessie. Her voice was hard. She did look round at him; he seemed so mighty sure of her.

"What do you say to that?" he said, pointing to one of plain straw, with a bow of ribbon on it. "Nice and neat and naty."

"I was savin'," he said, "and now I can get the house I wanted, and you

and me couldn't have it if it wasn't."

"Couldn't we?" said Jessie.

"Martha Cranfield has one with two roses in it. I'm as pretty as her."

"A slight prettier," said Dick.

"Martha's got to be fine, case folks should forget to look at her. When a lass has big blue eyes and yellow hair—"

Jessie turned a discontented shoulder to him.

"It's easy talkin'," she said. "Words is cheap too."

They walked the length of Fishgate in silence, and turning up New Hall Lane, passed the mill where most of their daylight hours were spent. The girl looked up at the grim building, with its darkened windows and its chimneys looming against the sky.

"Hateful old place!" she said. "Them wheels grind the life out of you. I ain't never bin young 'side her; her eyes blazed all her rebellion at him. 'You ain't never been young out time. I'm sick of it. I want to laugh like other girls. I want a bit of pleasure before I'm dead.'"

Dick flushed uncomfortably at her obvious scorn.

"I had a fancy for a house of me own," he said, "and, lass—"

"Then you should have your fancy," said Dick. "And Martha, maybe, 'ull help you to it. This sort of walk in 'out ain't good enough for me."

"Jess, coom, now, lass!"

But words are useless when a willful woman has made up her mind to take her willful way. Jessie piled up all his sins of omission upon his head. Dick heard her in her silence, and when she paused for breath he ventured to speak.

"I thought you an' me was wan," he said.

"Well, we're not, we're two," was the answer. "And now you know it. 'An' I'm goin' wi' Joe Briggs to Olympia to-morrow.'"

Jessie Alderson went to Olympia with Joe Briggs. She sat in all the glory of a sixpenny seat, when the other girls were in the threepenny ones at the back. The entertainment was uproariously funny. Joe rolled on his seat with laughter, and Jessie wondered why she wasn't enjoying it more. She was used to it now. She had been there three times in six months.

The summer passed. The mill was surely hotter and dustier than it had ever been before. Autumn came, and winter mornings followed. November was here. It was a bleak winter.

Mrs. Alderson, standing at her vaunted washtub had caught a chill, and now lay ill upstairs, and Jessie, who wanted the money badly, was prevented from going to the mill. The chill developed pneumonia. The parish doctor came, and shook his head. The patient's strength must be kept up, and she must be nursed night and day. Jessie did her best, but her resources were weak, and soon all the money was gone. Only the respectable poor know how soon the spectre Want can make his appearance at the door.

The spectre stood inside the Alderson's kitchen now, and Jessie put her head down on the kitchen table and wept out all her despair. The woman up and take away her cure! So the poor commissary bethought him of another plan. "If you regret your conduct I will not bring you before the magistrates." "I have only one regret: that I cannot begin again."

Leave him alone, sighed the perplexed police officer. So they allowed him to go. The faithful pursued the inventory makers with cries and hootings, then they returned to kiss the wounded hands of their pastors."

MARY MAGDALEN THE PENITENT.

FEAST JULY 22.

Very many if not most Catholic dioceses are placed under the patronage of some notable saint. The Cathedral church is named after that saint. In the Salt Lake diocese, St. Mary Magdalen is the patron saint. She is also named as the protector of the great Dominican order. The feast of this converted follower of Jesus, the penitent of Palestine, falls on Saturday July 22.

It is not easy for lay Catholics, even the pious, to remember many persons whom the Church venerates as saints. They may call some names during the recital of the Litany of Saints, but are without knowledge of the merits and sacrifices which led to their sanctification. But every Catholic, ever Christian, every reader of the Bible history has knowledge of the saints who lived while Christ was upon earth and preaching in Judea. Thus we remember Mary the Magdalen.

It is not the personality of the woman so much as it is the salvation through penance that brings the Magdalen so quickly to the mind of the remorseful sinner. If such great mercy and love was shown to the penitent, Jewish concubine, why not to me? If Paradise was opened to the penitent thief on the cross, why not for me? Such are the reflections of the soul burdened with sin. If the concubine and thief found pardon and rest in Jesus, nobody need be damned against his will.

It is easy for the woman without passion to be a model of virtue; and she is always the readiest to cast stones at those of her sex who yield to violent temptation. The Magdalen was one of the fallen. Under the Jewish law, it was a heinous offence—no pardon in life, no hope beyond. If she lived the sinner today that she lived in Judea, the Christian women are few who would give Magdalen shelter and bid her sin no more. It is the way of the world. As it is he who overcometh the flesh and suffers the contumely of men who stands near to God in His kingdom, so do followers of Christ reckon the depth and the cost of the penance that made a saint of a sinner. So is Mary Magdalen condoned in the eyes of such who hold that virtue has merit only when subjected to temptation. So is the person of Christ made more love-

able by his example of forgiveness to Mary Magdalen, and by raising her up to the pinnacle of celestial happiness.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

I. He was born and reared a Catholic but the desire of making money easily crept into his heart. He was not taught a trade as he grew up and he did not like to work. It would be a pity for such a bright handsome fellow as he to go to work anyway, he told himself.

So he set up a low saloon and over its door put the long honorable name of O'Hoolihan, and in a back room he put a number of chairs and tables, and although he didn't care particularly for music, he put a cheap clamorous piano in this sitting room, and hired a cheap, glary-eyed Italian to play it evenings.

And around him, little by little, gathered the vile and the depraved of the city—female birds of prey, gray haired scoundrels, thoughtless girls whose mothers sought victims, and they strayed into that sitting-room and drank in whiskey and beer and wine and absinthe and ratgine; and the money rattled into his till, and his wife wore silks and rode in an automobile, and men said that Michael was getting rich.

II. She was an innocent simpleton. Her parents were Irish and poor, and she toiled in a factory at a wage that was an insult to humanity. She did not like to work and in idle moments often wondered what life was and why so little of jollity fell to her lot. Fellow working-girls often told her of music and dances and of gay beaux met in quiet evenings, and one night Mike's place and she went into the sitting room and drank of the beer and the wine and the rag-time, and laughed a silvery little laugh and was foolishly happy.

And after that she went again and again, and her mother slept, and her father smoked his pipe by the fireside and talked of the Fenians of old days and Home Rule and the Plas of Cam-paign. He did not know she was at Mike's and one night she disappeared.

III. Michael O'Hoolihan was an Alderman, but he had to die like an ordinary mortal. He had six doctors at his bedside but no priest; and, in spite of the doctors, death struck him over the heart with a black rod, and he ceased to live.

The Great Door swung open a little way and a Shining One looked through his soul and declared sternly: "Through you poor Mary McCarty was brought down to ruin—yes, and through you a thousand souls were lost. Go hence to the place appointed you where there is wailing and torment forever."

And then a Mighty terror seized him and bore him away, and a great gate shut upon him and he began to hear sad cries and pale moans and the thousand bitterly reproaching him, while millions of red demons flew past him laughing at his anguish. And the next day in the land of the living, a bank went crash, and his widow was a pauper. God had avenged the ruin of Mary McCarty, and of the thousand that were lost.—Catholic Sun.

BUT HE DRINKS.

"He is a good salesman, but he drinks," is a statement occasionally heard in these days concerning traveling men. But this is heard much less often than heretofore, however, for the reason that the traveling men of this country are coming to be a class of total abstainers.

"He is a good clerk, but he drinks," is seldom heard in these days. Most merchants will not retain an employee who takes his glass. One of the best merchants in the central part of the State said to the writer not long since, "If one of my clerks was found going into a saloon he would get but one more Saturday night pay envelope."

It is a well known fact that the great mercantile house of Marshall Field of Chicago, a house which numbered its clerks by the thousand, had a standing rule that no clerk would be retained in its employ who either drank liquor or smoked cigarettes. And other concerns of all grades in every section of the country are rapidly following this example.

"He is a good foreman, but he drinks," is almost never heard concerning a bank employee at the present. The positions in the banks of State and nation, men of clean habits are universally desired. To count money and make accurate entries, to compute interest and keep accounts, have control of fiduciary funds and handle money belonging to widows and orphans only total abstainers are desired.

"He is a good foreman, but he drinks," may be said occasionally, but its frequency is growing less and less. Only a short time since a prominent official in the construction department of one of the Vermont railroads made a change in the foremanship in an important department for the sole reason that the former drank liquor and smoked cigarettes, and the new man did not.

A young graduate of the University of Vermont was put in the place of a skillful and experienced hand at a salary of \$85.00 per month at the start and with a long vista of increase stretching out in the future, for the reason that, having the requisite native ability and acquired training, he was of clean habits while the other was not. The lesson is significant.—Vermont Issue.

A humble heart is always gentle and tractable in its center, even if on the surface it may seem rough, through the surprises of a sharp and peevish temper.—Lacordaire.

Passion empties the heart of man. It takes away what is bad and does not replace what it takes away.—Ernest Hello.