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(CONTINUED.)

The visitors had been in the house a month—and in that month an observant eye might have noted much change, though all things in seeming went on as before—when the queen's orders enjoining all priests to read the service, or a great part of it, in English, came down, being forwarded by the sheriff to Father Carey. The mission arrived on a Friday and had indeed long expected.

"What shall you do?" Ferdinand asked Sir Anthony. "As before!" the tall old man replied, gripping his staff more firmly. It was no new subject between them. A hundred times they had discussed it already, even as they were now discussing it, on the terrace by the fishpond, with the church which adjoins the house full in view across the garden.

"Well, I think you are right," the younger brother said. By what means he had brought the knight to this mind without committing himself more fully I cannot tell. Yet so it was. Ferdinand showed himself always the cautious doubter. Father Carey even must have done him that justice. But—and this was strange—the more doubtful he showed himself the more stubborn grew his brother. There are men so shrewd as to pass off stones for bread, and men so simple as to take something less than the word for the deed.

"Why should it come in our time?" cried Sir Anthony frantically. "Why indeed?" quoth the subtle one. "I say, why should it come now? I have heard and read of the so-called Lollards who gave trouble awhile ago. But they passed, and the church stood. So will these gospellers pass, and the church will stand."

"That is our experience certainly," said Ferdinand. "I hate change!" the old man continued, his eyes on the old church, the old timbered house—for only the gateway tower at Coton is of stone—the old yew trees in the churchyard. "I do not believe in it, and what is more, I will not have it. As my fathers have worshipped so will I, though it cost me every rood of land! A fig for the order in general!"

"If you really will not change with the younger generations!" "I will not!" replied the old knight emphatically. "There is an end of it!"

cently and in order, with a clattering of rustic boots indeed, but no scrambling of ill words. The Clotmen were there. Baldwin had marked them well, and so had a dozen stout fellows, sons of Sir Anthony's tenants. But they behaved discreetly, and amid such a silence as Father Carey never remembered to have faced he began the Roman service.

The December light fell faintly through the east window on the father at his ministrations on his small altar, on the four Cludde brasses before the altar. It fell everywhere—on gray dusty walls buttressed by gray tombs which left but a narrow space in the middle of the chancel. The marble crusader to the left matched the canopied bed of Sir Anthony's parents on the right, the abbess' tomb in the next row faced the plainer monument of Sir Anthony's wife, a vacant place by her side awaiting his own effigy, and there were others. The chancel was so made that the church, the tower, the old and old and gray and solid and the tombs were so massive that they elbowed one another. The very dust which rose as men stirred was the dust of Cluddes. Sir Anthony's brow relaxed. He listened gravely and sadly.

And then the interruption came. "I protest!" a rough voice in rear of the altar suddenly, ringing harshly and strangely on the priest's accents and the solemn hush. "I protest against this service!" A thrill of astonishment ran through the crowd, and all rose. Every man in the church turned round, Sir Anthony among the first, and looked in the direction of the voice. Then it was seen that the Clotmen had massed themselves about the door in the southwest corner, a strong position, whence retreat was easy. Father Carey, after a momentary glance, went on as he heard, but his voice shook, and all still waited with their faces turned toward the west end.

"I protest in the name of the queen!" the same man cried sharply, while his fellows raised a murmur so that the priest's voice was drowned. Sir Anthony stepped into the aisle, his face inflamed with anger. The interruption taking place there, in that place, seemed to him a double profanation. "What is this?" he said, his hand trembling on his staff, and all old dames trembled too. "Let him stand out!"

The sheriff's spokesman was so concealed by his fellows that he could not be seen, but he answered civilly enough. "I am no brawler," he said. "I only require the law to be observed, and that you know, sir. I am here on behalf of the sheriff, and I warn all present that a continuation of this service will expose them to grievous pains and penalties. If you desire it, I will read the royal order to prove that I do not speak without warrant."

"Begone, knave, you and your fellows!" Sir Anthony cried. A loyal man in all else, and the last to deny the queen's right or title, he had no reasonable answer to give and could only bluster. "Begone, do you hear?" he repeated, and he rapped his staff on the pavement, and then, raising it, pointed to the door.

Coton thought the men must go, but the men, perhaps because they were Clotmen, did not go. And Sir Anthony had not so completely lost his head as to proceed to extremities, except in the last resort. Affecting to consider the incident at an end, he stepped back into his pew without waiting to see whether the men obeyed him or no and resumed his devotions. Father Carey, at a nod from him, went on with the interrupted service.

But again the priest had barely read a dozen lines before the same man made the congregation start by crying loudly, "Stop!" "Go on!" shouted Sir Anthony in a voice of thunder. "At your peril!" retorted the interverer. "Go on!" from Sir Anthony again.

Father Carey stood silent, trembling and looking from one to the other. Many a priest of his faith would have risen and hurled his church's curse at the intruder. But the father was not of these, and he hesitated, fumbling with his surplice with his feeble white hands. He feared as much for his patron as for himself, and it was on the knight that his eyes finally rested. But Sir Anthony's brow was black. He got no comfort there. So the father took courage and a long breath, opened his mouth and read on amid the hush of suppressed excitement and of such anger and stealthy defiance as surely English church had never seen before. As he read, however, he gathered courage and his voice strength. The solemn words, so ancient, so familiar, fell on the stillness of the church and awed even the sheriff's man. To the surprise of nearly every one, there was no further interruption. The service ended quietly.

altered. "Go to the Mere farm?" he said, not angrily now, but firmly and quietly. "No, girl, I cannot. I have been in fault, and I must stay and pay for it. If I left these poor fellows to bear the brunt, I could never hold up my head again. But do you go now and tell Baldwin to come to me."

"About my uncle," she murmured. "Well, well. What about him?" "I distrust him, sir," she ventured in a low tone, her color rising. "The servants do not like him. They fear him and suspect him of I know not what." "The servants?" Sir Anthony answered in an awful tone.

Indeed it was not the wisest thing she could have said, but the consequences were averted by a sudden alarm and shouting outside. Half a dozen voices, shrill or threatening, seemed to rise at once. The knight strode to the window, but the noise appeared to come, not from the chancel upon which it looked, but from the courtyard or the rear of the house. Sir Anthony caught up his stick, and followed by the girl ran down the steps. He pushed aside half a dozen women who had likewise been attracted by the noise and hastened through the narrow passage which led to the wooden bridge in the rear of the buildings.

Here, as the close on the far side of the moat, a strange scene was passing. A dozen horsemen were grouped in the middle of the field about a couple of prisoners, while on the bench by which they had retreated stood as many stout men on foot, headed by Baldwin and armed with pikes and staves. These seemed to be taunting the cavaliers and daring them to come on. On the wooden bridge by which the knight stood were half a dozen of the servants, also armed. Sir Anthony recognized in the leading horseman Sir Philip Clotmen, and in the prisoners Father Carey and one of the woodmen, and in a moment he comprehended what had happened.

The sheriff, in the most unneighborly manner, instead of challenging his front door, had stoken up to the rear of the house, and without saying with your leave or by your leave had snatched up the poor priest, who happened to be wandering in that direction. Probably he had intended to force an entrance, but he had laid aside the plan when he saw his only retreat manacled by the watchful Baldwin, who was not to be caught napping. The knight took all this in a glance, and his gorge rose as much at the Clotmen's trick as at the danger in which Father Carey stood. So he lost his head and made matters worse.

"Who are these villains," he cried in a rage, his face aflame, "who come attacking men's houses in time of peace? Begone, or I will have at ye!" "Sir Anthony," Clotmen cried, interrupting him, "in heaven's name, do not carry the thing farther! Give me way in the queen's name, and I will!"

What he would do was never known, for at that last word, away at the house, behind Sir Anthony, there was a puff of smoke, and down went the sheriff headlong, horse and man, while the report of an arquebus rang dully round the building. The knight gazed, horrified, but the damage was done and could not be undone. For, more, the Clotmen men took the sound for a signal. With a shout, before Sir Anthony could interfere, they made a dash for the group of horsemen. The latter, uncertain and hampered by the fall of their leader, who was not hit, but was stunned beyond giving orders, did the best they could. They let their prisoners go with a curse, and then, raising Sir Philip and forming a rough line, they charged toward the gate by which they had entered.

The footmen stood the brunt gallantly, and for a moment the sharp ringing of quarter staves and the shivering of steel told of as pretty a combat as ever took place on level sward in full view of an English home. The spectators could see Baldwin going wonders. His men backed him up bravely, but in the end the impetus of the horses told, the footmen gave way and fled aside, and the strangers passed them. A little more skirmishing took place at the gateway, Sir Anthony's being dealt to all his attempts to call them off, and then the Clotmen horse got clear, and shaking their fists and yowling vengeance rode off toward the forest. They left two of their men on the field, however, one with a broken arm and one with a shattered kneecap, while the house party on their side, besides sundry knocks and bruises, could show one deep sword cut, a broken wrist and half a dozen nasty wounds.

"My poor little girl!" Sir Anthony whispered to himself as he gazed with scared eyes at the prostrate men and the dead horses and comprehended what had happened. "This is a hanging business, in arms against the queen! What am I to do?" And as he went back to the house in a kind of stupor he muttered again: "My little girl! My poor little girl!"



"In heaven's name, do not carry the thing farther!"

It was clear at last that Sir Anthony himself did not think that there was the

(To be continued.)