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THE RIVALS.

By Gerald Griffin.

CHAPTER IX.

With the assistance of some friends, David had his old master conveyed to his brother's little dwelling in the neighborhood. During that night, and nearly the whole of the following day, Francis spoke not a word, and seemed to be scarcely conscious of what passed around him. He rejected all food, and delivered himself up to an extreme dejection of mind. Towards evening, however, he called Davy to his bedside and made him detail all he knew of the circumstances attending Esther's death, which the poor fellow, hoping to alleviate his master's affliction by awakening something like an interest in his mind, recapitulated with great precision. The nurse, he said, had found her lifeless in her bed. The Dammers were in the utmost distress at this event, and Richard Lacy had conducted himself, ever since, like a distracted person. While Francis listened to this last portion of the narrative, the speaker heard him ejaculate in a low whisper the words "Poor fellow!"

"That was what killed me!" said David, a few days afterwards in telling the circumstance to Mrs. Keleher, "the moment I heard him showin' pity for Lacy, I knew his heart was broke! He never will hold his head up again says I to myself, as long as he lives!"

Night fell, lonely and dark, upon those dreary hills, and Francis had not yet begun to take an interest in any thing which passed around him. David's family were all in bed, and he sat alone by the fire-side, watching, lest some sudden illness should render his assistance necessary to his master. He was just dozing in his hay-bottomed chair, and dreamed that he was holding a controversy with Aaron Shepherd, when he felt a hand press lightly upon his shoulder, and a voice whispered in his ear some words that his fancy construed into a different meaning:

"Wake, David, wake! I want you!" said the voice.

"I don't mind that a brass farthin'," murmured David, through his sleep, "I read the Doway Testament, with note and comment, an' I take the Church for my guide, not a man like Martin Luther, that was instructed by the devil himself. Doesn't he own it, in his books? A' howl your tongue now, Aaron. One time or another you'll know the truth o' what I'm tellin' you, an' d'rop your convartin'."

"Hush! David, David!"

"A' d'rop your convartin', man, I tell you again. Sure you know in your heart if there was no truth in it, 'twould be found out in the course o' fifteen hundred years."

Here he felt his shoulder shaken with a degree of force which compelled him to awake.— Looking up, he beheld Francis Riordan, pale even to ghastliness, standing at his side, dressed, and with his cloak around him.

"Masther Francis, is it you, sir? Oh, what made you get up?"

"Be still, David. Are your friends in bed?"

"They are, sir."

"Hush, speak low!" whispered Francis, "do you know the cottage where we used to watch for the wild duck?"

"At the foot of Derrybawn?"

"Aye, aye, upon the flat; is it occupied at present?"

"There's no one living there, sir, now."

"It is very well," said the young man.—

"Will you tell me now where they have buried Esther?"

David remained for some minutes staring on his master in great astonishment.

"My good fellow," said the latter, observing him pause, "this tale of yours has almost broken my heart. I was so sure of happiness, when I was returning to Ireland, that I find it almost impossible to sustain this disappointment. I think it would be some consolation to me if I could see Esther, once again, even in her grave."

David started back in his seat, and gaped upon the young soldier in mingled awe and wonder.

"Make no noise, but answer me," said Francis. "Is she buried in the vault of the Dammers?"

"'Tis there she is, sir, surely," returned David, "in the Cathedral at Glendalough."

"It is enough," said his master. "Come, then, David, arise and follow me down to the Seven Churches. Alive or dead, I must see Esther Wilderming once more."

David arose, still half stupefied with astonishment.

"Have you any instrument," said Francis, "with which we may remove the stones from the mouth of the tomb?"

This mention of an instrument placed the undertaking for the first time in all its practical horror before the eyes of David.

"Oh, masther Francis!" he said, "go into your bed, sir, an' don't be talkin' o' these things. Let the dead rest in peace! When we bury our friends, we give 'em back into the hands of the Almighty that gave 'em to us, to bless an'

comfort us in this world, an' he tells us that he'll send his own angel to wake them up when his great day is come. Let us love them, then, where they lie, silent an' cold, until the trumpet sounds, an' not presume to lay an unholy tool upon the house of the dead!"

"Be silent," said Francis, with a tone which had something in it of peculiar and gloomy sternness. "Come not between the shade of Esther Wilderming and me. Whatever was her thought of me when living, she now must know my heart, and I am sure that her spirit will not grieve to see me as a visitor in her midnight sepulchre.— You tell me that her face was changed by sorrow and by sickness, I wish but to behold it. It was almost the only sight on earth that could have made it worth a residence, that, and a people disenthralled and happy. It is gone from me, now, for ever, and except I seek her in her tomb, I have lived and hoped in vain. Ah, shall a few feet of earth hide Esther from my gaze, after I have come o'er half the world to look upon her? Arise and obey me!"

David dared not reply, but, taking his hat, went with his master into the open air. He brought with him a pick-axe, used by a relative who worked at the lead-mines on the neighboring hills, and followed his master in silence.

Before they had walked many hundred yards, the Valley of the Seven Churches opened upon their view in a manner as lonely and beautiful as it was impressive. The moon, unclouded by a single wandering mist, shed its pale blue light upon the wild and solemn scene. Before them, on a gently undulating plain, stood the ruins of the churches, with the lofty round tower which flung its shadow, gnomon-like, along the grassy slope. A few trees waved slowly to and fro in the nightwind. The shadows of the broken hills fell dark upon the streaked and silvery surface of the lakes hiding half the watery expanse in gloom, while the remainder, broken up into diminutive wavelets of silver, rolled on, and died upon the shore with gentle murmurs. One side of the extensive chasm in which the lakes reposed was veiled in shade. On the other the moonlight shone over tumbling masses of granite and feldspar, and glimmered bright on countless points that sparkled with mica and hornblende. A morning wind came downward, by the ruins, and seemed like the voice of the dead, heard thus at night in their own silent region.

Far on the left, overhanging the gleamy water, appeared that precipitous cliff, beneath the brow of which the young Saint Kevin hewed out his dizzy resting place. The neighboring legends say, that, in his early days, the Saint resided at the beautiful lake of Luggela, described in a former chapter, where he was first seen and loved by the fair Cathleen, the daughter of a chieftain in that country.

Nearer, and also on the left, stood the Cathedral, which was more especially the object of young Riordan's search at this moment.

"Pass on," he said to his attendant, "and see if there be any body loitering among the ruins?"

Lenigan obeyed, and Francis remained gazing on the gentle acclivity on which the ivied walls of the old church were standing. The burial-ground, with its lofty granite crosses, and its white head-stones glistening in the moon-shine, lay within a short distance. "O earth!" he said, within his own mind, as he looked musingly upon those slight memorials of the departed, "O earth our mother and our nurse, you are kinder to us than our living friends. You give us life at first, and you supply us with all that can make sweet, while we retain it. You furnish food for our support, raiment for our defence, gay scenes to please our sight, and sounds of melody to soothe our hearing. And when, after all your cares, we droop, and pine, and die, you open your bosom to receive and hide us from the contempt and loathing of the world, at a time when the dearest and truest amongst our living friends would turn from our mouldering frame with abhorrence and dismay!"

A slight signal, given by Davy Lenigan, here interrupted the meditation of the young man, and he proceeded to the church with a rapid, but firm step. He found David standing before the monument of the Dammers with the pick-axe in his hand.

"Lenigan," said he, "there is one thing that I have forgot. Return to the deserted cottage, of which we were speaking, light up a fire, and make a pallet of some kind, for I will not go back to your house to night."

David gazed on his master for some moments in deep perplexity and awe.

"For the sake of glory, masther Francis," he said in a beseeching tone, "what is it you mane to do this night? I'm in d'head, you're thinkin' o' doin' something on this holy ground that isn't right."

"Ask no questions," replied Francis, in a gloomy voice, "but do as you are commanded. Lose no more time, for the moon is sinking low, and the dawn may overtake us before we have done half what I intend."

David obeyed in silence, and Francis sat down on the headstone of some poor tenant of the grave-yard, expecting his return, and thinking of Esther.

A quarter of an hour had scarcely passed, when Lenigan returned, and they proceeded to remove the stones from the mouth of the sepulchre. A sudden wind, rushing through the aperture, blew chill upon the heated frame of the young lover, and made him shiver in all his limbs before he ventured to descend.

"What was that cry?" he said, suddenly starting.

"What cry, sir? I heard nothing."

"Not now?"

"Oh, now I do. 'Tis nothin', sir, only the owl in the Round Tower, or may be, the eagle that's startled in Lugduff."

"It must be so," replied Riordan, "but I thought it had almost a human sorrow in its shrillness. 'Tis strange, how soon our senses become the slaves of our passion, and flatter it with strange compliances, giving its color to the sights, and its tone to the sounds by which we are surrounded. How dark the vault is? So—and after all, and all, 'tis here that I must visit Esther!"

"Is it any thing he seen, I wonder," muttered David to himself, observing him pause and hesitate. "I hope an' thrust it is afeerd his gettin'."

But he hoped in vain. In a few minutes, Francis shook off his mood of meditation, and entered the mouth of the tomb, creeping along upon his hands and feet. Lenigan, who feared lest he might do himself a mischief, hurried after, and found him seated at the bottom of a flight of stone steps which ascended from the floor of the vault, leaning forward with his elbows on his knees, and his face buried in his hands. On hearing Lenigan's voice, he started up, as if from a reverie, and uncovering the lantern which he had concealed beneath his cloak, the vault became illuminated on a sudden.

"Take this cloak," said Francis, unclasping it from his throat, and handing it to his bewildered companion—"take this cloak, and hang it up before the opening, lest any one should see the light from without."

The attendant complied, and Francis proceeded to examine the lids of the coffins which were piled on all sides around the gloomy apartment.

"Was it by her own desire," said the young man, in a low and reverential voice, "that Esther was buried here, in the vault of the Dammers?"

"It was, sir," returned David, who almost trembled with fear. "Dear knows, masther Frank, this is no place for us to be talkin' this time o' night. Do whatever you have to do, an' come away, an' the heavens bless you, sir!"

Without returning any answer, Francis proceeded to examine the coffins with the open lantern. His attendant followed him with his eyes, as he read the inscriptions on the coffin-plates aloud, and observed him shrink and look still more ghastly when any denoted that the inhabitant was a female who had died young. One observation only David heard him make while he passed the light over the rich decorations and silver mounting of the coffins.

"I told you, I believe," said he, "that I am now wealthy. Lest I should forget to mention it in my will, take care after my death that I am buried in a plain coffin."

"Alther your death, masther Frank, a' ragal!" exclaimed David, in a terrified voice.

"Yes," said Francis, "if you should survive me. Ah, heaven, what ghastly foppery is this!"

He passed on, and came at length to a plain coffin, before which he paused, and began to tremble exceedingly. On the lid was a silver plate with the words, "Esther Wilderming, aged 21 years," engraved upon it. He remained for some time motionless, like one in a fit of deep musing, and then sunk down at once, utterly bereft of consciousness, upon the coffin lid.

CHAPTER X.

The alarm of David, at seeing his master thus lying insensible in the vault of death, was at its height. He hurried to the side of the unhappy youth, endeavored to arouse him into life, and manifested the utmost distress at the difficulty he found in reviving him.

"Masther Frank!" he exclaimed, "rouse yourself up, sir, an' let us come away! Masther Frank, I say! awake, stir again! O' that I mightn't sin but he's dead an' gone, an' I'm done for! Masther Frank, again! He's dead an' gone an' the neighbors 'll come, an' they'll catch me here, an' they'll say I murdered him, an' I'll be hung, an' kilt, an' spoilt, an' murther't, an'—O Davy Lenigan, Davy Lenigan, an' warn't you the foolish man to be said by him at all this holy night?"

A long deep moan, from the unhappy young man, cut short his anxious soliloquy, and occasioned David to redouble his attentions. In a few minutes Francis was again in full possession of his senses.

He took the pick-axe from the earth, and was

about to deal a blow upon the fastening of the coffin lid, when Davy ventured to arrest his arm.

"Why do you hold me?" said Francis, looking on him with an eye in which sorrow strove with anger, "let go my arm, and stand aside."

"No, masther Frank, forgive me, I can't, now, I won't let you do that."

"Let go my arm," repeated Francis, with a faint effort to free himself.

"You're not right in your mind now, masther Francis," said the faithful fellow, "an' you'd do something that's not right by the corpse an' coffin."

"Again, stand back and free me. I only wish," he continued, "to look upon the face for once, and then we will leave the vault together."

David dared not to offer even a word of remonstrance, but looked on in awe-struck silence, while his master, with some exertion, succeeded in striking up the lid from the coffin. The perfume of some balmy extracts, which were scattered in the shroud, diffused a sudden air of sweetness throughout the damp and gloomy charnel.

"It is very strange!" said Francis, in a broken whisper, while large drops of agony like those which are said to be wrung from a wretch upon the rack, glistened and rolled downward from his brow and temples. "It is very strange! How long is it now since Esther died?"

"Better than two days, sir, very near the third night now."

"It is very strange, indeed. Here is not the slightest change upon the face. Ah, death! It is as cold as iron!"

He raised the head gently, between his hands, imprinted a reverential kiss upon the forehead, and then drew back a little to gaze at leisure upon the face. It was extremely beautiful; and, owing, perhaps, to the peculiar light, seemed almost to have retained some shade of the carnation, to which, in life, it owed so much of its loveliness. The slight produced at length a salutary effect upon the blasted affections of the young lover, the tears burst from his eyes, and he leaned forward over the corpse, in a mood of gentle and heart-easing grief.

After some time, he rose again, and bade Davy to come nearer.

"Answer nothing, now," said he, "to what I shall propose, but obey me, at once, and without contradiction. I am going to take Esther from this vault, and to bury her near that cottage."

"Oh, murther! murther!"

"Peace, and do not breathe a word, but prepare directly to assist me. Replace the coffin lid, when I have taken her up; be speedy and be silent."

He raised the body with tenderness, laid it across his bosom, with the head resting on his shoulder, and signified that his attendant should close the coffin. This being done, and the cloak removed from the mouth of the sepulchre, he once more clasped it on his throat, and drew it close around the lifeless form which he bore in his arms. Stooping low with his burthen, he ascended the flight of steps already mentioned, and passed out into the air.

"Oh, vo!" murmured David to himself, "that I may be blest, but the gallows will be our portion for our doin' this night."

He followed his master, and they hurried out of the churchyard, passing beneath the ruined archway on the northern side, and down the slope which led to the common road.

His long abstinence, and the exhausting nature of the passions with which he had contended, had so far enfeebled the frame of the young soldier, that it was with difficulty he bore the corpse along. His attendant, who beheld him falter, ran hastily after, and endeavored to prevail on him to deliver the burthen to his care, but Francis would as soon have parted with his life. An unexpected assistance, however, presented itself.

When they came to the stile, which led to the road, they found a man standing near a horse and cart, which was half filled with straw. Francis at once suspected the object of this midnight visit to the grave yard, and resolved to take the advantage of it.

"Is that masther John?" asked the carman in a low voice.

"Have you all ready?" answered Francis, without hesitation.

"All ready, sir; pruh! tumble in, sir, at once, an' let us be off. Fax, you wor't long. Tumble in, sir, for I fear the police is out with Masther Lacy, the magistrate, in these parts.— It will set us to be in town before day."

Francis got into the cart, still holding the corpse in his arms, and they drove up the road without speaking. When they had arrived at the turn which led to the cottage so frequently alluded to, Francis laid a strong hold upon the man, and bade him in a low voice to stop the cart.

"Go down again," said he, "and wait for masther John. Stir, speak, move, raise hand or voice to cross me, and I will shoot you through the brains."

He drew a pocket pistol from his bosom and descended from the cart. The man stood stupefied, looking on, while Francis gathered the shrouded figure once more into his arms, and then cantered down the hill, apparently not displeased to be rid of so fiery a companion.

When the cart was out of sight, Francis hurried up the narrow lane which led to the cottage, and was followed by Davy, whose mind was now completely bewildered by the accumulation of terrors and mysteries which he had undergone.

"The Sack-em-ups!" he exclaimed, gazing down the road, in the direction of the Seven Churches. "The plunderin' Sack-em-ups? An' sure, what better are we ourselves this holy night after takin' the lady from her people? O mother, mother! its little you thought that any o' your children would ever turn out a Sack-em-up, to disgrace his parentage!"

They entered the cottage, where the fire was already burning cheerfully upon the hearth.— Having carefully closed the door, and made it fast behind them, they proceeded to arrange the body on a wide form, which was placed near the fire side, and the lantern was hung up, so as to shine full upon the lifeless features.

"There she lies, at last!" said Francis folding his arms and looking down on the dead face, "there now lies Esther Wilderming, the young, the gay, the lovely, and the virtuous! An old woman told me, once, that I had been overlooked in my infancy, and I am almost superstitious enough to credit her. Otherwise, why should it be that there, where my best affections have been centered and my keenest hopes awakened, there I have been ever sure to undergo a disappointment? But I have snatched her out of Lacy's arms, and even this dismal meeting has a consolation compared with that appalling rumor of her falsehood. Esther! dear Esther! I forgive you, now. How beautiful she was! Was! Oh, that word has death in its sound for me.— Esther, I will lead an altered life from henceforth. For aught in this world I never will hope more, not even for the natural blessings that go and come with the revolving year, for I think, if anything could shorten the liberal hand of Nature, and cause her to withhold her ancient customary bounties, it would be the longing of a wretch like me. I never more will dress, game, play, sing, laugh, or mingle in the gaieties of earth. My dream of death is out; my plans of quiet and domestic joy entirely baffled. In war, in peace, in action, or repose, in mirth, or in musing, I never more can know a happy feeling; never indeed, oh, never! never! never!"

He sunk down, utterly exhausted by grief, fatigue, and want of food, by the side of the corpse, the fire light shining dusky red on the pale and delicate lineaments of the dead, and on the no less pale and laggard aspect of the living who lay near. David lay stretched at a distance on a heap of fresh straw and rushes, offering up many prayers, and unable to conceive what would be the result of this extraordinary vigil.

* Sack-em-ups—the Dublin name for resurrection men.

(To be continued.)

REV. DR. CAHILL

ON THE IRISH CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT.

When one reads the history of the early Christian Church, studies the laws of its government, and compares its practices and the lives of its congregation with the parallel views and considerations of modern evangelical systems, the wonder is how any writer of Ecclesiastical learning could call this first, and this last gospel by the same name. Almost in every possible point where comparison can be made, there are few traces of identity to be found: there is not even similarity in the most important fundamental principles: and on the whole record of Revelation, the number of discrepancies, contradictions, and contraries of these new creeds far and away outnumber their agreements with the unchangeable truths of the Apostles' faith. No doubt, the most perfect society which shall ever hereafter in coming time be united in the one true belief, can never approach the model presented by the first inspired teachers of the New Testament: no future mortals shall ever reach the lofty pinnacle of sanctity on which they stood, taught by the lips, encouraged by the example, and supported by the Divine Founder himself. But while the Christian scholar cannot hope to see future men as perfect as the chosen Twelve, he does require, as an essential principle, that the past, the present, and the future laws on which Christianity is founded, shall be as perfect and as unchangeable to the end of time as on the morning when the tongues of fire rested on Peter and his associates. Men may be led by example, stimulated by eloquence, decided by entreaty: but by laws alone is the divine will accomplished, the human heart changed, and future happiness secured. Human redemption is a contract executed under the highest law of Heaven: and Christian hope is a corollary