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STORIES OF "FATHER WILLIE"

- THE CABIN BY THE COMMON.
AN ANCIENT MARINER.
SNATCHED FROM THE BRINK.
TWO BLACK SHEEP.
"THE GUDE FREEND."
A SOLDIER'S KISS.
"DUBLIN AND PROUD OF IT!"

OFFICE OF THE "IRISH MESSENGER"

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1932

STORIES OF "FATHER WILLIE"

THE CABIN BY THE COMMON.

HALFWAY up the road that leads to the hill at whose foot nestles select and picturesque Dalkey lies a Common. From here a fine view may be had on a clear day. In front stretches Dublin Bay, its blue waters dotted over with the white sails of yachts or stained with the smoke of a passing steamer. Across the Bay rises the Hill of Howth with its villas and bungalows perched on its green and rocky sides and its lighthouse lifting itself to the skies to glow there like a planet at night time. To the left the factories and warehouses of Dublin can be seen dimly in the haze, a thick pall of smoke hiding the rest of the city. A pleasant contrast is Dun Laoghaire, one of its townships, a mile or so away, which lies bathed in bright sunshine. Any evening towards five o'clock the "Mail Boat," as it is called, may be seen heading for Dun Laoghaire Harbour. On it comes straight and swift, making for home, its propeller churning up the sea and leaving a white trail of foam behind, while on a still day the noise of its engines is borne faintly to the ear. To the right of the Common is the town of Dalkey, with Dalkey Hill looking down protectingly upon it, while away in the background run the Dublin Mountains, which gather the storm clouds on a summer's day and roll their thunders from one peak to another.

The Common, in the 'eighties,' the time of this tale, was the playground of rosy, ragged children, and stray goats and donkeys contrived to find a precarious livelihood on its scanty pastures. Standing high and dry with a pleasant outlook, it seemed an ideal spot for cottages or even pretentious villas. The law, however, or public opinion, was too strong to allow what was considered public property to be built on. One building, indeed, had managed to erect itself, not, it is true, openly on the Common, but clinging stealthily to its side. In the distant past the head of a branch of the far-flung Murphy family, looking for a site for a house free of rent and landlord, had conceived the idea of building a home in a hollow between the side of the Common and a ditch bounding a neighbouring property. Here hidden away and unobserved by most, he raised his walls of mud, put in a door and a window or two, and covered the whole with a snug roof of thatch. By the time this was on the new Murphy Mansion had become the talk

of the hillside and had reached the ears of the police. One day a sergeant, with an important air and a fat notebook descended upon the builder and a lengthy interrogation elicited the following information: that one, Patrick John Joseph Murphy, recently arrived in Dalkey from many destinations, had erected a dwelling near or adjacent to Dalkey Common without leave or licence from anyone; that the said Murphy alleged that no leave or licence was necessary for such erection since the site of the building, though not on the Common, was part of the Common, and therefore nobody's property; that if leave or licence was necessary it was up to the police to prove the necessity; that finally, the aforesaid Murphy, having built his house, declared he was going to live in it, and that all the eviction men in Dalkey, or in Ireland for that matter, were not going to put him out of it. Confronted with such a determined opposition, and, perhaps, not being very sure of their powers in the matter, the authorities decided to leave Patrick John Joseph Murphy in possession of his house. Accordingly in this cabin by the Common several generations of Murphys had first seen the light, had lived and passed away with varying fortune, most of it misfortune. But in the "eighties" the Dalkey branch seemed doomed to extinction. The head of the house had died many years before, leaving his widow ten healthy children, but little more. The poor mother had a hard struggle to feed the many little mouths at home and to clothe and educate her large young family. But she faced the task with the courage and confidence in God characteristic of the Irish poor. One by one her children had grown up strong in limb and clean of heart, had kissed their mother good-bye, and left the home for distant lands. An old woman of over eighty, the Widow Murphy now dwelt in the cabin alone, living on the fond memories of the past and an occasional remittance from one or other of her scattered children. The neighbours were good to her with the unflinching goodness of the poor to one another, and did her many a kind service. Nor did she want for friends among the better class. Charitable ladies would send her little comforts and even drop in occasionally to see her. None of these kind friends was more welcome than "Masther Willie." "Masther Willie" was a youngster of twelve. He was a frail child, with a pale face, though like most highly strung children he had great reserves of energy. His grey blue eyes had a merry twinkle in them, but they could sparkle at adventure and flash with temper too. His mouth was his most striking feature. It was somewhat large, with lips somewhat thin, and round it hung an expression at once

whimsical, winning, tender, sympathetic, while a resolute jaw and chin beneath gave strength and determination to the whole. Willie had early made the acquaintance of the Widow Murphy. While still in the stage of velvet suit and long curls, he had been taken to her cabin one day by his nurse and had been fascinated by the cave-like kitchen, dark and mysterious, and by the old woman who looked like a witch as she crouched over the smouldering logs on the hearth. But the Widow Murphy had a pleasant face and a kindly way with her and quickly won the heart of the little fellow, and later on, when he grew bigger and loved to go to the cabins of the poor, the Cabin by the Common received its frequent visit. He was on his way there now. Across his shoulder was slung a canvas bag used to carry comforts to his poor. To-day the presents had been carefully chosen, for it was the eighty-fifth birth-day of the Widow Murphy. At the bottom of the bag lay a pair of warm stockings, which by dint of cajolery, flattery and threats Willie had induced one of his sisters to knit for the Great Day. There was a big bottle of thick nourishing soup he had coaxed his mother to let the cook prepare. There was soft white bread with the crusts removed so that the gums or uncertain teeth of the Widow might not meet with opposition. There was a package of tea and a package of sugar drawn from a store bought with his precious pocket-money and kept in a secret place under lock and key. There was a small canister of snuff, for the old lady dearly loved a pinch; but the *pièce de résistance* was a half-pound slab of Dalkey's best plug tobacco, wrapped up in tissue paper and tied with blue ribbon! For Willie had recently discovered a little weakness of the Widow Murphy. One day he had come quietly upon her sitting at the fire and smoking a battered clay pipe! At his step she had whipped the pipe from her mouth and hidden it in a shamefaced fashion.

"Hullo! Granny," said Willie, "I didn't know you smoked."

"I don't, *alanna*," was the answer, "leastways, not often. But when me ould teeth starts painin' me, I takes a whiff. It's a gran' cure, is the pipe, for the toothache."

So to the birth-day gifts Willie had added this sovereign remedy for toothache.

From "Melrose," Willie's home, the Common was only a few hundred yards, and these he proceeded to cover on his stilts. Stilts were then a popular form of amusement for boys. Willie was very expert in their use and could walk, run and jump on them with ease, or hop on either stilts, while brandishing the other or using it as a lance to charge an adversary. He was

the proud possessor of two pairs of stilts, one with the foot-
rests a few feet high, the other a pair of giant stilts that raised
the user of them ten feet from the ground and enabled him to
cover space with huge strides and cross walls without dismounting.

There was a short cut to the Cabin across a field belonging to
the residence opposite "Melrose," and this Willie now took, as
many a time before. The crossing was not always without
adventure. A fierce dog would sometimes rush out from the house,
and though its charges and snaps at the stilts were an amusement
and joy to the youngster perched safely far above, its barking would
at times bring on the scene a crabbed old gardener who disliked
trespassers, and said so loudly and in unusual language. One day
a more exciting incident occurred. When Willie was halfway
across the field, he noticed a cow, grazing not far away, raise its
head and stare at the queer-looking object passing by, and then
come trotting towards him. Next moment he had slid down
one stilt to the ground and was taking to his heels. Thereupon
the bull—for it was a bull—with an angry bellow came tearing
after him with head down and tail in the air. It was a close shave,
but Willie just managed to half jump, half fling himself over the
paling that bounded the field as the bull crashed into it. Foiled
of its prey, the enraged animal knelt down and tore up the ground
with its horns as though to show what it would have done had it
caught the fugitive, while Willie made faces at it and encouraged
its efforts from his safe vantage.

To-day, however, there was no adventure and the Cabin was
reached without incident.

"A happy birthday, Granny!" exclaimed Willie, as he entered
the kitchen. "May you live to be a hundred!"

"Thank ye, kindly, Masther Willie, but what wud an ould wan like
me be wantin' to live to a hundred for, cumberin' the ground."

"Can't one get holier, the longer one lives?" asked Willie.

"I dunno," was the reply, "perhaps the saints can, but it's a
pilin' up of purgatory for meself I do be doin' wid the years."

"Well, you're not in Purgatory yet, Granny," laughed Willie "so
you can enjoy the presents I've brought for your birthday."

The bag was opened and its treasures produced one by one amid
the exclamations of delight and benedictions of the old woman.

"What's this, *alanna*?" she asked when last of all the packet
in tissue paper with its blue ribbon was drawn out.

"Open and see," was the answer.

When, with fingers trembling with excitement, she had untied
the ribbon and removed the tissue paper, disclosing the roll of

brown plug, Granny raised her hands and eyes to heaven and
exclaimed. "Glory be to God, if it isn't a darlin' bit of 'baccy!
How did ye ever think of such a thing, Masther Willie? Sure it
was what I was wantin' more than the soup and the stockin's,
grand an' welcome that they be. Me ould teeth do be very bad
at me these times," she added with a twinkle in her eye.

"Here's my last gift for you, Granny," said Willie, as he took a
rose from his button-hole and pinned it to her white cap, "but
don't make yourself too smart or it will be wedding presents
I'll be bringing next time!"

The old lady laughed delightedly as she moved slowly about
the room putting away the gifts and getting ready the saucepan
to warm up the soup. As he watched her, Willie noticed the
contrast between her snowy cap and neat appearance and the
blackened walls and rafters of the kitchen. The Widow seemed to
guess his thoughts. "Ah," she said, "I've no son to whitewash
the house for me now. I do what I can to keep the place clean,
but it is little enough I can do wid me ould bones stiff wid the
rheumatics. If only wan o' me children was at home wid me,
things would be different," and she sighed.

"Never mind, Granny," said Willie, "I think I know someone
who will do the job for you."

Next day Willie sought out Silvester, the handy-man of the
house. "Sil," he asked, "how do you whitewash a room?"

"Is it whitewash a room, Masther Willie? Why, the babe
unborn cud whitewash a room, it's that simple. Ye furst wash
down yer walls rale clane. Then half a bucket of lime to a bucket
of wather; stir well, and lay on wid even sthrokes of a whitewash
brush—an' there ye are!"

"Straight and simple, like yourself, Sil," said Willie. "I'll see that
the walls are as clean as your own face on a Sunday morning."

"Ye do be always pullin' me leg, Masther Willie," grinned the old
fellow. "If ye want a bit o' whitewashin' done," he went on, "old
Sil will do it for ye wid a heart an' a half—or anything else either."

"I know you would," replied Willie, "for you have a heart as
big as your body. But I have already a chap in mind who will do
the job for me. Thanks all the same."

That evening Willie went off to Wilson's, the monster house of
the town, where almost everything from a needle to an elephant,
could be bought, though more needles than elephants were sold
there. A stone of lime and a whitewash brush were purchased with
some of his precious pocket money. An apron was borrowed
from the parlour maid and a bucket from the cook, with solemn

promises of returning them in a day or two. Provided with these materials Willie arrived next morning at the Cabin by the Common.

"Granny," he announced, "I'm going to lock you up in your bedroom."

"Glory be to mercy!" exclaimed the old woman, "what for, Masther Willie?"

"The kitchen's going to be whitewashed," was the answer, "and you'd get whitewashed yourself if you stayed here."

"An' who's goin' to whitewash me kitchin, *alanna*?" asked the Widow.

"Never you mind, Granny," was the reply. "He's a smart chap anyway, and he'll do the job well! Just take yourself and your knitting into the next room, and by the time you are through with the heel of that sock, your kitchen will be beginning to look lovely."

Willie carried the old lady's chair into the bedroom and put her sitting in it comfortably with her knitting. He then shut the door and placed the dresser against it. He collected the few pieces of furniture and cooking utensils into a heap and covered them with some newspapers he had brought with him. Armed with a sweeping brush and standing on the kitchen tale, he swept walls and rafters clean of dust and cobwebs. Next he placed two chairs on the table, on one of which he put a bucket of water and his whitewash brush, while on the other he mounted and began washing down rafters and walls thoroughly. It was hard work for a boy of twelve, and back and arms were aching by the time his task was finished. But the most difficult part had yet to be done. He prepared his bucket of whitewash according to Sil's directions, and with a little practice he succeeded in getting the knack of laying on the brush straight and evenly. The rafters had nearly dried when the last wall of the kitchen had got its coat. Willie saw however that a second coat would be needed to make a perfect job of it. Accordingly he gave the floor only a rough cleaning, though himself a very careful one, put back the furniture in its place, and then brought in the Widow to inspect the work. The old woman was almost in tears with delight and gratitude when she saw how bright and clean the kitchen already looked. "Ye were right, Masther Willie," she said, humouring the little fellow and pretending not to know who had beautified her kitchen, "he's a smart chap that did that work wherever ye got him."

"He'll be back to-morrow to give it another coat," said Willie, "and then you'll have a kitchen fit for a queen to sit in!"

Early next day Willie was back in the Cabin by the Common with fresh instructions from Sil, and with a pot of brown paint he had coaxed from the old fellow. For he had conceived the idea of giving the inside window-frames and doors of the kitchen a coat of paint when the whitewashing was done. Once more the Widow was imprisoned in her bedroom while the second coat was going on walls and rafters. Then doors and windows were carefully cleaned, puttied and painted. Lastly Willie went down on his knees and scrubbed the flags of the kitchen till they were spotless, put everything neatly in its place and made up a blazing fire to dry the room. It was into a changed and cheery kitchen the Widow stepped when Willie flung open her bedroom door and invited her to a cup of tea he had got ready. Instead of the cobweb-covered rafters and black and grimy walls, snowy beams ran overhead, while the flames of the fire danced on the whiteness of the walls. Doors and window frames were glistening in their new coat of paint. The kitchen floor was spotless, the kitchen utensils shining; everything was in its place, neat and tidy. On the table covered with a clean cloth stood two plates and cups and saucers, with milk and sugar, a pat of butter, a small pot of jam and scones, while a teapot and a canister of tea awaited the kettle simmering on the hearth. The Widow threw up her hands at the sight. "Oh, Masther Willie," she cried, "may earth be yer paradise and heaven yer bed for what ye have done for the poor lone woman!"

"How did you know I did it?" asked Willie.

"Didn't I see ye thro' the keyhole slavin' an' killin' yerself, me darlin'?"

"You're a real woman, Granny," said Willie, "curious like the rest of them! There's no hidin' anything from you. But give yourself and myself a cup of tea. I could drink half a dozen of them I'm that thirsty."

Encouraged by his success in the kitchen, Willie determined to tackle the Widow's bedroom, and after a couple of days' work it too was transformed. Lastly he turned his attention to the outside of the house. He climbed up on to the roof and removed some unsightly growths of grass and weeds and swept down the thatch. He whitewashed the chimney stack and walls and painted the windows and door a dark green. He cleaned the path leading to the house of weeds and removed all dirt and rubbish that lay near. Inside and outside there was soon no cleaner nor neater cottage on Dalkey Hill than the Cabin by the Common.

AN ANCIENT MARINER.

IT was a blustery March day. Gusts of wind came racing at intervals along the cliff path that led to the coast-town of D—, picking up dust and paper and pebbles on the way, and whipping merrily the little wave tops that sprang up in scores in the sea far below. But soon the wind's fitful mood changed, and after one great gust it settled in the north-west for a steady blow. Quickly the wave tops became hills, the hills watery mountains, as the wind rose. Great billows came thundering against the rocky coast only to be tossed high in sheets of spray or to be sent staggering back in broken masses. A clumsy-looking brig could be seen far out riding comfortably under the tiniest of storm staysails, taking no more heed of the heavy seas than the long-winged gulls that floated round her. In contrast to her bare poles was the cloud of canvas of a large, three-masted ship that buried her bows in the foam at every forward dive, wetting the clews of the upper topsails in the smothering spray that showered about her. Coming from the other direction was a liner that sped on her way with irresistible force, flinging the seething brine right and left, dividing the mighty rollers in twain or riding three seas at a time, but ever forging ahead and leaving the opposing billows broken and beaten behind her.

A priest came swinging along the cliff path with hat off and head thrown back to the wind behind him. "A glorious day!" he thought as he stopped and drew a deep breath and gazed out to sea. "This is a wind to sweep away weariness and put new life into one. I should like to be out in that three-master yonder. They must be getting a tossing and ozone enough to knock all the ill-humours out of them and keep them fit for a long time to come." Continuing his walk the priest reached the top of the cliff, where the path turned into a sheltered road along which benches had been erected. On one of these sat a man looking out to sea through a telescope. "Good day," said the priest. "Are you looking at that clipper? Her skipper is a daring chap to keep all that canvas on her in a wind like this."

At the sound of the voice the man lowered his telescope and looked up. He was a powerfully-built figure with a rugged, mahogany-coloured face that contrasted strangely with his snow-white hair.

His forehead was broad and lofty with a prominent bump on each side that looked like two horns cut short. Great bushy eyebrows gave a fierce appearance to a countenance that was already stern and forbidding. A goat-like beard and a mouth stained with dry tobacco juice completed a not very attractive picture. When he saw the priest a dark scowl passed over his face.

"I'd like to be on board her, though," went on the priest. "It's a glorious sensation fighting one's way through the angry sea, one moment sucked downwards with a wall of water all round, and next minute climbing up a mountainous billow that gives a view of the white-crested enemies on all sides that await your descent to rush on afresh. If I wasn't a priest, I'd like to be a sailor, I think."

"Would you, now," said the other, the surly look on his face relaxing a little.

"Yes," was the reply. "I was born near the sea. As a boy I was often in it or on it. I loved bathing, fishing, sailing. The big, strong, masterful sea, yet with its soft tenderness of a woman, always appealed to me. It is like God, terrible and irresistible, yet tender and attractive."

The figure on the bench grunted.

"You have a look of the sea about you yourself," continued the priest.

The other laughed derisively. "I have been on the sea," he said, "more years than you have been on the earth. Man and boy I have been at sea over fifty years. There's nothing afloat I can't sail—I don't reckon darn steamers which are not rightly ships at all, but only iron machine boxes. But put me on board a vessel like yon clipper, and I'd sail her anywhere. She's a dandy ship, is she. She reminds me of the old *Grampus* that I commanded for many a year."

"So you are a sea-captain," said the priest.

"Yes," was the reply. "Captain Huckleburn is my name, Horny Huckleburn, as my friends call me."

"I'm Father Doyle," said his companion, "a Jesuit from Dublin. I am giving a mission here."

Captain Huckleburn gave a slight start at the name, and the priest fancied he saw a softer look creep into the hard face. "Look here," he said as a thought struck him, "I should like to hear something of the many seas you have sailed and the many lands you've seen. I can't stop to-day. Would you be round here to-morrow afternoon?"

The old man hesitated for a moment. "Will you come to

my house?" he asked. "I live at 2 Rosemount Villas on the Quay. I could tell you some of my experiences. I should like to show you, too, the model of the *Grampus* I've made."

That evening at dinner with the priests of the parish Father Doyle happened to mention he had met an old sea-captain who seemed an interesting character.

"Did he tell you his name?" asked the Parish Priest.

"Yes," said Father Doyle, "Captain Huckleburn."

"Horny Huckleburn!" cried the table in chorus. "Do you mean to say Horny Huckleburn spoke to you! Why he is the greatest anti-cleric in Ireland!"

"He not only spoke to me," replied Father Doyle, "but he invited me to his house, and I am going there to-morrow."

The astonishment grew greater at this announcement. "How in the name of heaven did you get him to talk to you?" he was asked. "He hates priests like poison, and it is nothing but black looks and muttered curses we ever get from him."

"Not knowing anything about him," answered Father Doyle, "I wished him good day, and as he had the look of an old sailor, I started talking about ships, and though at first he was a bit surly, he soon became quite friendly, and as I have said, he invited me to his house."

"Well, well," said the Parish Priest, "the age of miracles is not passed! Certainly for Horny Huckleburn to be friendly to a priest is a kind of miracle."

"Is he a Catholic?" asked Father Doyle.

"Nobody knows what he ever was. His present religion seems to be hatred of all religions, and especially of the Catholic religion."

"That would go to show that he was once a Catholic," said Father Doyle. "The best haters of our Faith are lapsed Catholics. I'll try and find out when I see him to-morrow."

"You will have a beauty to tackle," was all the encouragement he got.

Next day Father Doyle sought out 2 Rosemount Villas, which he found to be one of a small but neat row of houses. He knocked and rang, and the door was opened by the Captain himself.

"Come in, sir," he said, and led the way into a tiny room fitted up like a ship's cabin. "Do you know," he went on as he handed Father Doyle a chair, "you're the first priest that ever entered a room of mine. To be straight with you, I'm a priest-hater and I'm well-known to be such. Why I asked you here, I don't know, except that you love the sea which I love, and well, perhaps, because

you seem different from other priests, and besides——" here he broke off.

Father Doyle laughed. "Forget I am a priest, and talk to me as you would to one of your old shipmates. Is that the model of the *Grampus* you told me of?" pointing to a beautifully made model of a full-rigged clipper that stood on the table. "She's a McKim clipper, isn't she?"

"How do you know she's a McKim?"

"Oh, I'd know those American clippers anywhere, with their yacht-like lines, low free board and raking masts. I love their tall tapering sail-plan and stem and stern posts. They look like great white gulls when all their sail is set."

"Then you'll be able to understand and appreciate all about my old ship," said the Captain. "Come and have a look at her."

The next quarter of an hour was spent in examining and discussing the beauties and merits of the *Grampus*. The old man was delighted to find so intelligible and interested a companion. "Why," he exclaimed at last, "you seem to know as much about my old ship as I do myself!"

"Didn't I tell you I was fond of the sea and all that sails on it," replied Father Doyle. "I've read a lot about ships and studied drawings of them. That's a wonderfully good model which only a sailor and a lover of ships could make. You are going to tell me of some of your experiences, aren't you?"

"With pleasure," said Captain Huckleburn, pointing to an armchair, while he settled himself in another and reached for his pipe. "Will you smoke? I've no cigars or cigarettes, but you can fill up from my pouch."

"Thanks, I don't smoke," said the priest. "But do you pull away. Smoking helps talking, they say."

The time went quickly as the Captain told of strange adventures in many lands, and Father Doyle was surprised when a clock chime announced that an hour had passed. "I must be going," he said. "Thank you ever so much, Captain. You have been most entertaining. I should like to come again and hear more if I may."

"You will be very welcome, sir. It is a long time since I had such a good listener."

As Father Doyle turned to go his eye caught sight of a large framed photo hanging on the wall. "Is that your wife?" he asked.

"She's more to me than any wife; she's my mother," was the reply.

"She has the look of a sweet, good woman," said Father Doyle.

"She was the best mother in the world," a tender look coming into the stern face of the old man as he gazed at the photo. "I loved her as I have never loved anyone. Do you know that I felt drawn to you when you told me your name, because her maiden name was Doyle."

"Then you must be a Catholic," said the priest, "with a Doyle for a mother."

A terrible change swept over the countenance of the man. His face became drawn and ghastly; his eyes blazed like burning coals. "Don't dare to speak to me of religion!" he cried. "I'm done with it for ever. God took my mother from me and I'll have no more to do with Him!"

"Good-bye, Captain," said Father Doyle, quietly, "I'll look in again to-morrow," and next moment he was gone.

"He is certainly a Catholic," thought Father Doyle as he made his way back to the church. "Probably well-instructed in his religion by a saintly mother whom he loved, and loves, tenderly and deeply. The poor chap is angry with God for having taken his mother and is trying to get back his own on Him by damning his soul. It's a case of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face! I fear it will be hard to get round him. But it's got to be done, and done quickly, too, before the Mission ends. I must start the nuns and children praying."

The following afternoon, and every day for the next week, Father Doyle managed to drop in for a chat with the Captain, who was always ready to talk of his sailor days. Bit by bit, with tact and patience, he was induced to tell the story of his soul. It was as Father Doyle had suspected. His father was English and without religion; his mother was a saintly Irishwoman who taught her only child, with care, the truths of her religion. When he was twenty years old she died. Her death drove him half crazy with grief and filled him with a great bitterness against God. This grew with the years until it had become a fanatical hatred of God and His Church. So much Father Doyle learnt, but when he tried to show the old man the error of his ways and induce him to take up his religion, it was all in vain. A dark, dogged look would settle on his face and he would lapse into a sullen silence; or he would demand roughly to be left alone. One afternoon Father Doyle came in as usual and found his friend pacing up and down the parlour in agitated mood. He stopped when he saw the priest, and pointing to the door, cried savagely,

"Clear out! I've had enough of you and your damned religion. I have made up my mind once and for all. I'm going to live and die as I am."

"If you do," said Father Doyle, "you will never be with your mother again," and with that he turned and left the house. On the Sunday that the Mission closed, Father Doyle determined to make a last attempt to save the soul of his poor friend. Accordingly he went down to Rosemount Villas, and finding the door of No. 2 open, he walked quietly into the parlour. Captain Huckleburn was sitting at the table in the centre of the room with his head in his hands. He raised his eyes slowly as he heard the door open. Next moment he had sprung to his feet with a horrible oath, and snatching a large knife that lay on the table, he rushed at his unwelcome visitor, shouting, "I'll make an end of you and your annoyance!" His face was distorted with rage, his eyes flashing, a white foam flecked his lips, while the bumps on his forehead stood out like the horns of some animal. Father Doyle took a step forward and presented his breast for the blow, calmly looking his assailant in the face. The infuriated man hesitated; the look of rage faded from his countenance; his arm dropped nervelessly to his side, and he stood trembling. At last, in a broken voice he said: "Father, you've won. I'll go to confession to you."

SNATCHED FROM THE BRINK.

"A TELEGRAM for you, Father," said the Sister, laying the envelope on the table.

Father Doyle looked up from his writing with a smile. "Thank you, Sister," he said, "I was expecting one."

Having finished the letter he was writing, Father Doyle opened the telegram placed by his side. As he read it, a slightly puzzled look passed across his face. He thought for a moment, and picking up a railway guide, studied it. Then he crossed to the electric bell and pressed the button.

"Sister," he said, when the Lay Sister appeared, "I wonder could I see reverend Mother for a moment."

"Certainly, Father, I'll get her at once," was the answer.

In a few moments Reverend Mother entered the room.

"Mother," said Father Doyle, "I have just got a telegram from my Provincial telling me to return to Dublin by the first available train, as I am to cross to England this evening. I find I shall have time to give the Community the last lecture of the retreat, if I may give it now. I'm sure the Parish Priest will say Mass for you to-morrow in my place and give you Benediction."

"Of course, Father, we can have the lecture at once," said Reverend Mother, "but I am sorry you have to rush off like this. Were you expecting this news?"

"No, indeed," replied Father Doyle. "I was expecting a telegram, it is true, but not from the Provincial, nor with an invitation to take a trip to England. Perhaps the Provincial thinks I want a little rest and is sending me to Blackpool for a week," he added with a laugh.

A couple of hours later the Limited Mail was carrying Father Doyle swiftly to Dublin, which was reached well up to time.

"Here I am, Father," he said as he entered the Provincial's room, "ready for marching orders."

"Well," replied the Provincial, with a smile, "your marching orders are to go to prison! Here is a telegram I got this morning from England, from the Governor of D— Prison. 'Please send Father William Doyle, S.J., to D— Prison. Woman to be executed to-morrow asks to see him.' Can you throw any light on the summons?"

Father Doyle shook his head.

"No," he said, "I don't know of any of my friends who are going to be hanged!"

"Well," said the Provincial, "in any case you had better go. You will have just time to catch the night boat for Holyhead. You will get to D— at 5 a.m., and you will have time to see this poor woman before she is executed."

Day was dawning when Father Doyle reached D— Prison. He was shown at once to the office of the Governor, who welcomed him courteously.

"It was good of you, sir," he said, "to come all this way at such short notice. This poor woman has been asking for you earnestly, and it will comfort her to see you."

"But," said Father Doyle, "the whole thing is a mystery to me. Who is this woman, and why does she want to see me?"

"Her name is Fanny Cranbush," was the answer. "She is a girl of the unfortunate class who was convicted for her part in that poison case you may have seen in the papers. When brought here after her trial, she was asked in the usual way if she would like to see some minister of religion. She replied that she had no religion and had no need of priest or parson. A few days ago, however, she sent for me and said she had changed her mind and would like to see a certain priest. 'What is his name?' I asked. 'I don't know,' was the reply. 'Well, where does he live?' 'I don't know.' 'But how can I get you a priest whose name and address you don't know? Can you give me any information at all about him?' 'All I can tell you,' she replied, 'is that this priest was in Y— about two years ago. I was told he was from Ireland and was giving what is called a Mission in a church there. For God's sake get him for me! I want to see him so much before I die.' 'I'll do my best, of course,' I said, 'and, perhaps, I shall be able to find him for you.' I at once got into communication with the police of Y—, and inquiries were made at the different churches of the place if a clergyman from Ireland had given a Retreat or Mission there some two years before. At the Jesuit Church the police were informed that a Father William Doyle from Dublin had given a Mission there a couple of years previously. The address of your Superior was obtained and the telegram sent him that has brought you here."

"I'm still in the dark," said Father Doyle.

"Well," replied the Governor, "I'll take you to her, and she will be able to clear matters up, doubtless. There are some hours yet before the execution takes place, and if you wish, you may

stay with her to the end. Will you please come with me, sir."

The Governor led the way up two flights of stairs and down a long corridor, at the end of which he stopped before a cell, and producing a bunch of keys unlocked the door.

"This is her cell, sir," he said, "and I shall leave you alone with her."

Then beckoning to the warder on guard inside to leave, he stepped back and let the priest enter.

Father Doyle saw a girl still in the twenties sitting with bowed head on the edge of a narrow bed. As he came towards her, she looked up with a drawn, weary face. But next instant her look was transformed as she sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

"Oh, Father, thank God, you are come!"

"I'm glad I've come, my child," said Father Doyle, as he took her by the hand and led her to a chair. "And now you must tell me why you have sent for me. Have we ever met before?"

"Yes, Father, but, of course, you don't remember. Two years ago you stopped me in the street one night in Y—. I was a bad girl, have been all my life, and was out on my work of sin. You said to me, 'My child, aren't you out very late? Won't you go home? Don't hurt Jesus. He loves you.' You said this so gently, so appealingly, and then you gave me a look that seemed to go right through me."

Father Doyle nodded.

"I remember," he said half to himself, "I had been hearing confessions late that night and was on my way home."

"Your look and words stunned me," went on the girl. "I actually turned back, and went home in a dazed state. All that night I lay awake. The words, 'Don't hurt Jesus. He loves you,' kept ringing in my ear. Had I hurt Jesus? Did He love me? Who was He? I knew very little about Him. I had had little schooling and less religion. I had never prayed. I had never been baptised. Mother told me that before she died. Yet, 'Don't hurt Jesus. He loves you, . . .' seemed to find an echo in my heart. I felt as if He was in some way within me. I saw you once again, Father, after that night. I was with another girl and you passed on the other side of the street. 'Who is that clergyman?' I asked my companion. 'I hear he is from Ireland,' she replied, 'and is giving a Mission or something here.' For weeks after that I kept off the streets, but then want and hunger drove me out again. I sank lower and lower, until now I am to be hanged. I came here hard, defiant and unrepentant,

and wanted to have nothing to do with priest or parson. Then one day your words came back to me. 'Don't hurt Jesus. He loves you.' Something seemed to snap within me and I wept—the first time for many years. I felt changed, softened, and there came a great longing to see you and to learn more about Jesus. Now that you have come, won't you tell me more about Him? Won't you set my feet on the road that goes to Him?"

"Do you mean, my child, that you wish to know about the one True Faith, that you want to become a Catholic?"

"Yes, Father, I do, with all my heart."

The essential articles of faith were quickly explained and drunk in with eagerness by a soul that thirsted for the truth. Then the waters of baptism were poured for the first time upon her head, and all the wicked past was washed away.

"I shall leave you now for a while, my child," said Father Doyle. "I am going to try to get permission and the requisites for Mass here, when I shall give you Jesus in Holy Communion."

Father Doyle hurried off to the nearest Catholic Church, and without much difficulty obtained the necessary leave and outfit for saying Mass. A tiny altar was erected in the cell, and Fanny heard her first and last Mass and received her God for the first and last time.

She refused the breakfast offered her. "I have just eaten the Bread of Life," she said with her smiling thanks.

As she walked to the scaffold with Father Doyle beside her, she whispered to him, "I am so happy, Father! Jesus knows that I am sorry for having hurt Him, and I know that Jesus loves me."

A moment later and Fanny Cranbush, with her baptismal robe unspotted, was in the arms of Jesus.

TWO BLACK SHEEP.

"DURING the Mission I heard by accident of two men who had been away from the Sacraments for forty and fifty-two years respectively. One was a hopeless, the other a desperate case, upon whom missionary after missionary had tried his hand in vain. They were so bad that the priests of the town did not even mention them among the people to be looked up—it was only waste of time, they said. Clearly no ordinary course of action would do here; so Our Lord, having, as I said, accidentally made known these poor souls to me, put a thought into my head. I went to the church, and kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, I had a straight talk with the Sacred Heart. 'Look here, dear Lord,' I said, 'You have promised to give priests the power of touching the hardest hearts. Well, I am going to take You literally at Your word, to put You on Your trial. If you will soften these two 'hard nuts,' I will never doubt this promise again. Remember now You are on Your trial, for nothing will convert them but a miracle of grace.' Somehow I felt that the battle was already won and that, though the Sacred Heart was going to give me the happiness of reconciling these poor souls, the work of conversion was to be all His.

"I set out with great confidence to visit number one, an old Papal Zouave. I was not prepared for what followed. I had been told that he had no religion, no faith, etc. To my question, was he attending the Mission? came the startling answer, 'Father, for the past few days I have been thinking seriously of it.' 'Will you come to confession?' I asked, for I saw it was now or never. 'I will,' he replied. I shook hands and left him with that promise given. After the sermon that evening I heard confessions and waited for X., but no X. came, as I half expected. Dinner-hour next day saw us together again. 'I kept my word, Father,' he said, 'I was at the sermon, but fear seized my heart and I ran out of the Church.' Poor fellow, I felt for him, but he had to face the music. 'Come now,' I said, 'down on your marrow bones.' I quickly ran him through his confession, gave him Absolution, and left the old fellow sobbing like a child with sorrow and joy beside his bed. Someone else's eyes were not dry either as I walked away. Next morning X. made his Easter Duty before the 1,700 men who filled the church. That evening when I came

out to preach, I found my friend sitting prominently inside the altar rails, which had been reserved for the 'quality,' glorious in his Sunday best, with flaming red tie and a flower in his button-hole. It was his own idea of reparation, and surely an acceptable one to the merciful and loving Heart of Jesus.

"I need not say that this visible sign of God's goodness gave me great courage and confidence in tackling number two, and I wanted it, judging from what I had heard. I went down one night to his house and was met at the door by a sour, crabbed old man, who made no secret of the fact that I was a most unwelcome visitor—I was not wanted and the sooner I took my departure the better. In fear and trembling I got inside the house somehow, while he left the door wide open that I might lose no time in departing. I sat down uninvited; my friend stood and glared at me, snorting. The very helplessness of my case appealed to me, for I felt that all human power was out of the question here and that even the Sacred Heart had a hard task in tackling this beauty. I found he was a well-read man, who had travelled a good deal, and had lived for a long time in Sheffield, a city I knew well. I was at home at once. We talked Sheffield for an hour; and though he did not sit down, I saw he was thawing, for 'Sir' was now added to his laconic 'Yes' and 'No,' which eventually reached 'Your Reverence' once. As I left him, he actually said, 'God bless you,'—his first prayer, I suppose, for years. Though there had been no talk about religion, I went home glad, thinking I had done well. How little I suspected that the devil was also hard at work and that my troubles had not yet begun.

"I could not get to him again till Sunday, the closing day of the mission. I found the old man crouching over the fire and looking fifty times as black and as fierce as before. What had happened? I had not long to wait for the answer. 'You brought me bad luck with your visit,' he cried, 'I went back to my work to find I was sacked for nothing, and I have nothing before me now except starvation or the workhouse.' Then came the usual tirade against God, the rich, etc. My heart sank, for if he was hard before, he was hopeless now. Yet I was glad of the change that had taken place, for this would be a real triumph of the Sacred Heart. I soon saw, however, that all I said only angered him more, and yet something told me that if I let him slip now, he might never get the chance of salvation again. Talk about playing a twenty pound salmon in the river, it was nothing to the tussle with that poor soul! It was only when it was all

over that I realised what a strain it had been, for I felt quite sick.

"I could say only one prayer, 'Lord, You are on Your Trial, remember Your promise.' I was nearly in despair, for it seemed I was only doing more harm than good. He was becoming more insulting and openly told me to leave him alone. 'You are not the first,' he sneered, 'who has tried this game, and you won't succeed where the others have failed. I have made up my mind and it is too late to change now; I will die as I have lived. I know as well as you do that I shall go to hell, but that's my business; leave me alone.' It was the darkest hour.

"I could only think of the promise of the Sacred Heart—'I will give priests the power of moving the hardest hearts'—and this was a hard one God knows. 'Lord, remember Your promise,' was all I could say, for the devil was working might and main and knew I was leaving in the morning. Suddenly grace struck him. He turned to me and said quietly, 'I will tell you what has kept me out of the church so long.' He had magnified the importance of a trifling thing and had pictured all sorts of obligations which he could not face. A few words of explanation cleared all difficulty away. 'You have lifted an enormous weight off my mind,' he said. The rest was easy. He promised to come to confession. I offered to hear him there and then, but he said he would sooner do it like a man, and would be at the church at nine, after the closing of the mission.

"Nine came, half-past, and there was no sign of him. Then a girl came to me and said, 'Father, Mr. Z, has been walking up and down the square opposite for the past half-hour.' It was the last effort of the devil. I went out and took the poor fellow by the arm when he told me that he was absolutely unable to set foot inside the door. Our talk did not last long, the load of fifty years fell from his soul, and Holy Communion in the morning sealed his reconciliation with Almighty God. The Sacred Heart HAD kept It's promise."

"THE GUDE FREEND."

THE door of No. 1, Paradise Row, stood ajar, so Father Doyle pushed his way into the hall. It was a dark uninviting spot. The ceiling was cracked and discoloured, the walls damp-stained and grimy. There were holes in the flooring and half the banisters were gone. The atmosphere was close and pervaded with insanitary smells. "For all the world like a Dublin slum," thought Father Doyle as he looked around. "Yet this is Scotland. 'The poor you have always with you,'—even in thrifty Scotland. I wonder are there any Catholics here? Likely enough." Father Doyle went up the rickety stairs and stopped at a door on the first landing. He knocked, and a muffled sound within seemed to invite entrance, so he opened the door and entered.

A man crouching over a few sparks of fire looked over his shoulder at him. When he saw the priest, he scowled and asked gruffly, 'Wotcher want?'

"Any Catholics here?" said Father Doyle.

"Go to hell!" came the snarling reply. "Thanks," said the priest, "I prefer heaven; climate healthier, pleasanter company, you know. So long, old man."

"Nothing doing there," said Father Doyle to himself as he closed the door and mounted the second flight of stairs. Sounds of merriment came from one of the rooms on the next landing. A song was just ending and shouts and clapping of hands followed its close. Getting no answer to repeated knocks at the door, Father Doyle turned the handle and stepped into the room. Half a dozen men and girls were seated round a table, drinking and smoking. One of the men had just risen to his feet for a song, when his eye fell on the priest. He stared in astonishment. "Blest if it ain't a bloomin' sky-pilot dropped from 'eaven, mates," he exclaimed as the others followed his gaze. "Welcome to hour 'umble 'ome, Reverende Sir," he went on with mock solemnity. "It ain't as nice as we'd wish, but my missus is away at present enjoyin' 'is Majesty's 'ospitality, so things is hupset like. Say, mates," he continued turning to his companions, "let's give this parson bloke hour 'ospitality. Let's give 'im somethink fer nuffin, though hit break hus. 'Ere 'ave a drink'" and he held out a glass of beer to the priest.

"No, thanks," said Father Doyle smiling. "I'm trying to make two ends meet, so I can't afford to let one end drink. It's not drink I am looking for but friends of mine. Any Catholics among your lot?"

"Catholics? You ain't a Catholic, 'Enery, are you? Nor you, Hangeline? I ain't one any way, ain't nuffin. Heat, drink and be merry is my religion, and a bit of alright, too."

"Well, be merry in God," said Father Doyle, "and don't forget the second half of the text; 'To-morrow we die.' Good night and God bless everybody."

"I wonder what brought that Cockney chap so far north as this," mused Father Doyle, as he closed the door and stood on the landing. "Got a job here perhaps. Well, that's blank number two. But didn't Christ try Peter's faith three times, so perhaps He wants a third attempt from me. What about this room opposite?" The door of it stood open, and as he walked towards it a thin weary voice within called out, "Iss that ye, Janet?"

Father Doyle paused on the threshold and looked into the room. An oil lamp threw gleams of light across the darkness and showed an interior, poor yet with a certain air of distinction. The few pieces of furniture were good if shabby. Some books and knick-knacks were arranged with taste. A glass with flowers in it stood on the table and over the mantlepiece hung a picture of a village church with snow-bound lane, robins, and the home-going congregation. Everything was scrupulously neat and clean. An old woman, also very neat and clean, sat propped up in a high-back chair before the fire.

"Ye are verra late, Janet," she said as she heard the step at the door.

"I'm not Janet, Mother," said Father Doyle as he walked to her side. "I am a priest from Ireland who is giving a mission in the city here."

At the sound of the strange voice, the old woman turned a sad and withered face with a startled look, but the priest's kindly smile reassured her.

"Frae Ireland?" she said. "Ma graundmither wes frae Ireland."

"Then you're half Irish yourself," said Father Doyle laughingly. "Was it your father or your mother that was Irish?"

"Ma faither. But a'av no wish for ma faither. He was—yet it's no for me tae blacken ma ain bluid."

"Since you've Irish blood in you," said Fr. Doyle, "perhaps you are a Catholic?"

A troubled look stole over the face of the old woman. "A' nicht be," she answered cautiously after a pause.

"I think I can guess what that means," said Father Doyle with a smile. "You were once a Catholic but are nothing now, haven't practised your religion for years, maybe."

The old head nodded. "That iss God's truth. Ma mither wes Scotch an' Prusbytairian; ma faither wes juist naethin'. But ma graundmither wes a sanct. She gotten me christened, learnt me ma prayers an' gied me goot reelegion, but she deed nicht lang after ma Fust Communion. After her deith ma mither wudna lat me gang tae the Catholic chapel, an' a' wudna gang tae her kirk, so a' gaed noowhere an' gave up reelegion. A' mairrit weel an' hed ainst a graund hoose an' fower bonnie bairns. Twa o' them deed young, an' a lass and a laddie gaed furrin, an' never sae much as a line hev they sent tae their puir auld mither, an' at times a' nigh deed thro' want o' ma bairns. But misfortune didna feenish wi' that. Our bonnie bussness failed, an' ma guidman deed o' a broken hert, an' noo ma hame iss this wee room in a tenement hoose an' ma servants, Janet, a neebur's lass, tae gie a hand. It's a judgment on me for ma pride, for ma Jeems used tae say that for a boastit a' cudna be beat. Ah! but it' been a sair lesson. Ma life hes been sad an' fu' o' tribble, an' noo at the tail end o' it a'm feared tae dee. A've dune naethin' for God. A' didna mak profession o' reelegion. A' surely tried tae live clean an' honest an' said the prayers ma graundmither taught me. An' mair than fifty years a've asked God daily no tae forget me and tae send me a gude freend afore the end tae tak me tae Him."

"God has heard your prayer," said Father Doyle gently. "He has sent you the Good Friend you prayed for. He has sent you His priest to straighten out the past, to make all things right and bring you back to Him."

The old withered face of the woman lit up at the words, and she looked at the priest earnestly with bright eyes. "Oh! div ye think that, Sir—Faither? But a' ken weel that it iss so. A'm likin' yir face—an auld wumman can read fouks' faces and mak' nae mistake. A'm likin' yir wy' there's a kind o' warmth about ye a' canna get ower. Ye pluckit up ma speerit maist extra-ordinar. It has been weary wark tae live wi' one's sins, but noo God hes sent me a Gude Freend tae bring me back tae Him. Won't ye take me tae Jesus, Faither?" A'm a puir and sinfu' bairn wha wearied o' hame an' gaed awa' intae the far country. A'didna ken what a'wass leavin' or the sair hert a' gied Jesus.

"I will indeed, my child, with all my heart" said Father Doyle, "but let us have a little talk together about Jesus and His holy teaching first." Father Doyle found that most of the early lessons of childhood had not been forgotten and more came to mind with a little aid. Soon he was able to help her through her confession, and the transgressions of a life of nearly ninety years were cast into the mercy of God and washed away in the Precious Blood. "I will bring you Holy Communion in the morning," said Father Doyle. "Meanwhile you can be quietly thinking of and preparing for the coming of Jesus."

Next morning Father Doyle returned carrying the Sacred Host. He found Janet putting the finishing touches to an altar in a corner of the room. For the little maid happened to be a Catholic, and on hearing the good news she had gone to a convent hard by and brought all that was necessary for the coming ceremony. The old lady herself was sitting in her high-back chair, very clean, a snow-white cap on her head, and with a happy light in her eyes.

The pax was laid on the tiny altar: the room blessed, the absolution spoken, and then for the second time in ninety long years Jesus entered a soul so wonderfully the object of His mercy and love. Father Doyle knelt down beside the old woman and together they made the Acts of Thanksgiving after Communion. "Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Body of Christ, save me. Water from the side of Christ, wash me clean. O good Jesus, hear me. At the hour of my death call me. And bid me come unto Thee."

Tears of joy streamed down the withered cheeks of the old woman, nor were the priest's eyes dry. She seized his hands and raised them reverently to her lips while she whispered, "Oh, Faither, it's a gled day for me! A'm so happy! Hoo gude Jesus hes been tae me, a puir sinfu' wumman! Hoo gude ye hev been! A thousand, thousand thanks. Nae doot ye are the Gude Friend o' ma lang-year prayers."

A SOLDIER'S KISS.

"A MAN badly wounded in the firing-line, Sir. "Father Doyle opened his eyes slowly. He had been dreaming a pleasant dream of something hot. One always dreamt of lovely hot things these cold nights in the trenches—warm blankets, roaring fires, huge piles of food steaming hot.

"You'll need to be quick, Father, to get him alive." By this time Father Doyle had grasped the fact that someone was calling him, that some dying man wanted help, that a soul perhaps was in danger. He sprang up from the waterproof sheet laid on the ground on which he had flung himself in his clothes an hour before to get a much needed sleep. In a few seconds he had pulled on his trench boots, jumped into his trench coat, and was hurrying from his dugout.

It was just 2 a.m., snowing hard and bitterly cold. "God help the poor fellows holding the tumbled-in ditch that is called the front line," thought Father Doyle, as he felt the icy wind, "standing up to their knees in mud and water hour after hour. God help still more the wounded soldier with his torn and bleeding body lying in this awful biting cold, praying for the help that seems so long in coming."

The first part of the journey was easy enough except that the snow hid ruts and shell-holes into which Father Doyle stumbled from time to time as he ran along. But soon he came to a part of the trench that bore the ominous name of Suicide Corner from the fact that the enemy had a machine gun trained on it, and at intervals during the night pumped a shower of lead on the spot in the hope of knocking out some chance passer-by. As luck would have it the rat-tat-tat of this gun began just as Father Doyle reached the Corner. To make matters worse a star-bell shot high in the heavens lighting up everything with dazzling brightness. But on the other side of the exposed road was a dying man calling for a priest. Father Doyle did not hesitate a moment. With a prayer for protection he ducked low and ran across the open stretch. Overhead and on each side whip-whip, whizz-whizz, went the bullets, tearing after one another in their eagerness to find a billet. In a moment that seemed an age Father Doyle was across untouched, though more than one bullet buried itself

in the snow beside him with an angry hiss. A few minutes now brought him to the place to which he had been directed. He found the wounded man gone.

"The stretcher-bearers have taken him away, Father," he was told. "They are not long gone and you'll overtake them if you hurry."

Father Doyle sped on again through the slush and snow. Once he tripped over a duck-board and went sprawling into a muddy pool, getting wet to the skin; once he missed his way and had to retrace his steps, losing precious moments. But these mishaps only made him press on faster and redouble his prayers that he might not be too late. At length he caught sight of the stretcher-bearers ahead moving slowly with their burden. He was soon by their side. When the men saw the priest, they stopped and laid their wounded comrade gently on the ground.

"He's conscious, Father," whispered one of them, "but he hasn't long to live."

Father Doyle looked down at the poor fellow lying white and motionless in the mud and snow with the life crushed out of him by a cruel shell. He was a splendidly built young lad, not much more than twenty, with golden hair and handsome features. His eyes were closed, he was deadly pale and from his parted lips came at intervals a stifled moan. Father Doyle knelt down beside the dying boy and took his hand. He opened his eyes, and a glad look came into them when he saw the priest.

"Ah! Father Doyle, Father Doyle," he whispered faintly. "Thank God you've come, Father! My heart was sore to die without the priest."

"God loves you too much to let you die without the priest," said Father Doyle. "He has sent me to prepare you for heaven. I am going to anoint you. But first, is there anything troubling you since your last confession?"

The stretcher-bearers withdrew a little as they saw the priest put on his stole and bend down to catch the confession that came faintly from the lips of the dying soldier. Then while every head in the little group was bared came the solemn words of absolution, "*Ego te absolvo*, I absolve thee from thy sins," and that soul was made more worthy for the welcoming arms of the Saviour. Next Father Doyle took out the oil stocks and anointed the poor smashed body, and the Holy Unction seemed to ease the bodily pain, as time and again he had noticed it to do. The boy smiled gratefully and motioned Father Doyle to bend lower as if he had some message to give. As Father Doyle did so, he put his two

arm's around the priest's neck and kissed him reverently. It was all the poor lad could do to show his gratitude that he had not been left to die alone and without the consolation of receiving the Last Sacraments before he went to God. This effort was his last. Next moment the shadow of death passed over his face. Once more Father Doyle gave absolution and began the prayers for the dying, "Depart, Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God, the Father, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost who sanctified thee, and may the Lord Jesus Christ receive thee with a smiling and benign countenance."

As the angel of death hovered near, peace for the moment seemed to descend upon the battle-fields of Flanders. Not a sound broke the stillness; a silent star peeped out from behind a cloud, while, as if anxious to hide the scene, nature dropped noiselessly her soft mantle of snow on the living and the dying.

"DUBLIN, AND PROUD OF IT."

S-S-S-SEP! Cr-r-e-r-rump!! Whee e-e-iou-hrump!!! Bullets snapped and whined; shells screamed overhead; the air swayed in the frightful tempest of rushing metal; the ground reeled under the tremendous thuds that smote it. The young officer hugged more closely the side of the shell-hole in which he crouched. "My God," he groaned, "this is awful! Will it never stop?" Suddenly there was a roaring whirlwind, a deafening crash, and the earth seemed to throw itself at the skies as a huge shell tore a cavern for itself in the ground close by, and disappeared in a cloud of flame and smoke.

"That's hot stuff!" said a cheery voice.

The young officer looked up and saw an Army Chaplain smiling down at him from the edge of the shell-hole. The apparition was startling.

"In the name of Heaven, Padre, where did you drop from?" exclaimed the officer. "Did you come out of that shell? But hop down, or you will be blown to bits."

"Well, any port in a storm," said the priest, as he let himself down into the shell-hole, "and Jerry has the wind up outside all right. I was up the line looking after some of my boys who got hit and ran into this 'liveliness' on my way back. But we're safe enough here, for isn't it a point of honour among shells not to drop twice into the same hole?"

His companion laughed.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that's one of the many truths out here that is perfectly untrue. But I'm glad you've come, Padre. This *inferno* was getting on my nerves for want of company. I'm Captain D—, of the Liverpools. I see you are 16th Division. Do you happen to be Father Doyle?"

"Yes, that's my name," answered the priest.

"I thought so," said the other, "I have often heard of you, Padre, and how fond you are of the shells."

"Indeed no," said Father Doyle, "the coward is too strong in me for that. But when I have my bit to do, I know I can count on God's protection, and that gives courage."

"I wish I had a little of that kind of courage," said the other wistfully.

"Why shouldn't you? You're Irish, aren't you?"

"Yes," answered Captain D—, "Dublin, and proud of it!"

"I'm Dublin, too," said Father Doyle, "that is to say, Dalkey, which is Dublin enough, isn't it?"

"Dear old Dublin!" sighed his companion, "I wish I were back in it safe. I have a young wife, married a month ago, waiting for me there. Yet I have the feeling that I shall never see her again."

"Feelings don't count for much," replied the priest, "especially when they are out of tune, as they are bound to be in this racket. You are in God's hands. He knows what is best for you, and will do what is best for you. Since you're Dublin, you are probably a Catholic."

"I am, a sort of one," was the answer.

"Which means, I suppose," said Father Doyle, with a smile, "that you pray little, go to Mass less, and to the Sacraments not at all!"

Captain D— laughed.

"That's my soul's portrait fairly accurately," he said.

"Not a pretty one, is it?" rejoined the priest, "nor a safe one these days."

"Look here, Padre," replied the other, "I don't suppose I'm much worse than other chaps, but somehow I've grown careless and got off the track in my religion."

Father Doyle nodded.

"I know," he said, "and God has sent me across your path to lift you on again. Will you go to confession? I'll run you through."

The young officer's face kindled as the grace of God touched his soul.

"Father, I will!" he exclaimed. "Just give me a little time to prepare."

"All right," answered the priest, "three minutes on your knees before the execution!" . . . "*Ego te absolvo . . .* I absolve thee from thy sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

As the words of absolution fell from the priest's lips, and the Precious Blood washed away the sins of years, the terrifying rushes and crashing explosions around rose to a deafening torrent of sound as though Satan were raging furiously at a soul being snatched from his grasp. Suddenly the tumult ceased; there came a great stillness, into which crept the song of a lark high up in the sky.

"The music outside seems to be over," said Father Doyle. "I think I'll be pushing on. Some of my boys may be wanting me. Good-bye, Captain, and God bless you!"

"God bless you, Father!" exclaimed Captain D——, grasping the priest's outstretched hand. "You have made me wonderfully happy. I have no fear of the future now. I am ready for whatever God sends me. May He reward you for what you have done for me! I'm Dublin, and doubly proud of it now since I have met you, Padre!"

Late that evening, Father Doyle, hungry and weary, was making his way back to his dug-out when he stumbled over a corpse in the dusk.

"Another poor fellow gone home," he thought. As he peeped into the face of the dead man, he started.

"My God," he exclaimed, "Captain D——! So soon! Shot through the head, and killed instantly, most probably. Poor boy! Well, he was ready to go. How good God is to have sent me to prepare him for death! 'The mercies of the Lord I shall sing for ever,' and, indeed, an eternity were needed to number them. How peaceful and happy he looks! Ah, if only his poor young wife in Dublin could see the look of happiness on his face, it would ease the pain of her aching heart! I must get his address and write and tell her all."

Reverently Father Doyle laid the body in a shell hole, read the Burial Service over it, and covered it with earth. From a piece of duckboard he fashioned a rude cross, on which he wrote, "Captain D——, Liverpool Regiment. R.I.P.," and put it up over the grave. He turned to go, then stopped, and bending over the cross, he scribbled under its inscription the words: "Dublin, and proud of it!"

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