The Catholic Journal

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THE BRITISH SITUATION

Fears About the Stability of the Rosebery Government.

The British political situation has taken an unexpected turn, and the conservatives confidently predict that parliament will be dissolved within the present month. The tories may be over-sanguine, but their prediction is by no means an extravagant one in view of the present aspect of things political. The liberals themselves admit that a crisis may be precipitated any day, and after their experience of last week they no longer attempt to conceal their appreciation of their precarious hold upon power. Of course, any further defeat will involve the resignation of the ministry and the opposition are looking forward with feelings of the utmost confidence to the next appeal to the country, which they believe will result in the return of a conservative majority. The normal government majority of thirty-six had been reduced Thursday night to twenty-four through the absence of the Parnellite members, who have recently been spending their time in Dublin quarreling among themselves and denouncing the government's lukewarmness toward the home rule question. Three liberals were also absent and not paired. This would not have rendered the position so critical, but the successive divisions taken in the house that night show that the liberal whips cannot with any degree of certainty rely upon their men responding promptly, if at all, to their summons. From the twenty-four mentioned the government's majority dropped to eighteen through absenteeism, then to fifteen, and was finally wiped out in the division on the East London water bill. The liberals made a great outcry of dissension on the part of the McCarthyites, but this was disproved by an analysis of the voting, which disclosed the fact that the McCarthyites stood by their guns, and that the dwindling majority was caused by the abstention of the radicals from taking part in the division. The ratio of the vote of the McCarthyites exceeded that of the liberals.

The discontent of the radicals has so nearly reached the point of revolt that the government is extremely unwilling to take the risk of seeking a majority on James Henry Dalziel's motion to abolish the veto power of the house of lords. Fearing to test the sense of the house on this question, the government have practically wiped out Mr. Dalziel's motion by appropriating the day set for its consideration to the discussion of private members' bills and government business. This change in the programme will be made on motion of John Morley. A very large majority of the liberal members are eager for immediate action against the house of lords, and earnestly desire to obtain a decisive expression of opinion on the subject on the part of the house, such as will force the hand of the government, but the ministers are not so eager. Just now they are anxious for delay and will make every effort to secure it. Sir William Harcourt and John Morley were very active in canvassing the house in this matter, and endeavored by private conversations to induce the irreconcilable radical members to submit to the waiting policy of the government and acquiesce in the shunting of Dalziel's motion until some more opportune time. Instead of meeting with any success in their campaign, Messrs. Harcourt and Morley were met on all sides by the radical ultimatum that time must be given to the anti-lords motion and given in the very near future, too. The conservatives are watching their chance in the defection of the radicals, a chance which, they believe, will not be long delayed. Their whips are active, energetic and enduring. The normal conservative voting strength in the house has been considerably augmented by the attendance of members who are seldom seen in their seats, and besides this a full force of unionists are on hand ready to assist in snatching victory from the liberals on any division that may catch the government napping or find them without a majority.

The fidelity of the McCarthyite section of the Irish party in adhering steadfastly to the government continues unimpaired, despite their internal feuds, and has excited a great deal of comment even from the opposition members, who are forced to admire their consistency. A new piece of vituperative literature has been furnished by Frank O'Donnell, formerly a prominent member of the Parnellite section of the Irish national party in the house of commons. O'Donnel has written a letter to United Ireland, which that paper publishes, charging the Irish members with having been duped or corrupted by the government. Whether they are the victims of the government's brazen mendacity or their own hidebound idiocy he leaves it to themselves to decide, but he concludes by fulminating at the Irish parliament thus: "To your kennel, you hounds, to your kennel. There's English dogs' meat waiting for your docile pack!" Those who are extremely familiar with the inner life of the Irish party know that the insinuations of O'Donnell are absolutely false. The anti-Parnellite members do not draw a single penny from the purse of the liberal party. It is possible, however, that some or all of them may receive assistance in carrying on their fight at a general election, but otherwise not one of them is a beneficiary of the liberal fund. It is a matter well known to those who have had the opportunity to learn the facts that both the Parnellites and the McCarthyites have absolutely clean personal and party records as regards their relations with the English parties, and no member of either of the English parties would dream of asserting otherwise.

Be Amiable.

We have sometimes seen a form of distinguished personal beauty disfigured by a want of cleanliness and by being clothed in slovenly attire. The exquisite symmetry could not be altogether concealed; but how much more attractive would it have appeared with other and more suitable accompaniments! So it is with character; there may be real beauty of holiness, but in rent and slovenly attire of temper. Changing the illustration, I may observe the brilliancy of the most valuable diamond may be hidden by earthly incrustations, the metre of gold may be dimmed for want of polish, and the most majestic portrait be half covered with dust or mildew. So religion, which is more precious than rubies, and more valuable than gold, and the very image of God in the soul of man, may have its worth and its excellence depreciated by infirmities of temper and a want of amiable deportment. Therefore cultivate amiable habits carefully. It may be difficult at first, but practice makes perfect. Remember that each lesson conquered makes the next one easier.

Nature's Teaching.

Man dies, but nature remains. The seasons keep their appointed time; day returns with its golden splendor, and night with its eloquent mystery. The same stars that lit the ghastly battlefield of Troy's rough heroes—which shone on the marble streets of Rome, and on the sad eyes of vigil keepers in the living glow of inspiration—the watch-fires of the angels, which, through centuries of devastation and change, have still burnt on unceasingly, speak to us as they did to Dante and Shakespeare and Milton—of divine glory and omnipotence, the everlasting beauty and love of God.

Happy Marriages.

Yet, depend upon it, as you grow older you will see more and more instances and proofs of the reality and the depth of the love of husbands and wives for each other in the most ordinary, commonplace couples. I have heard of marriages where love has died out from some canker of selfishness or worldliness at its heart, but I have oftener seen unsuspected proofs of a love stronger than death in all sorts of people in whom I had never before discovered any signs of sentiment or romance.—Sir Edward Strachey.

Ashamed of the A. P. A.

The city of Springfield, Ill., is in a blaze of excitement over the circulation of a pamphlet which purports to be an expose of the A. P. A. It contains the names of 700 or 800 persons who are alleged to be members of the association. Many whose names are thus listed deny connection with the association and suits for damages are threatened by certain persons who fear that their business interests may suffer as a result of the publication.

ST. HUBERT'S LAST HUNT.

High and clear, on the evening air,
Soundeth a silver horn;
Far in the shade of a grassy glade,
The dulcet strains are borne;
As, parting the brushwood left and right,
From the depths of a thicket near,
There leaps to the light a fair young knight
Tracking a milk-white deer.

From early morn, with his hound and horn
And his hand on his trusty bow,
Over smiling mead, over marsh forlorn,
He hath followed that shape of snow;
An hour agone, his faithful roan
Beneath him, breathless, rolled;
And, sudden, prone, like a dog of stone,
His hound lay dead and cold.

But, up and on!—lest the game be gone;
Fleet-foot o'er slough and moor,
The huntsman lone, thro' a path unknown,
Is lured by that shooting star:
Now there, now here; now far, now near,
The dart may miss its aim,
But onward still, with a sturdy will,
Sir Hubert tracks his game.

At last (good luck!) in this sunny nook
The weary chase is done;
The stag drawn breath at a crystal brook—
The prize is sure'y won!
The graceful creature stoops its head
To the waters cool and bright,
In that sparkling mirror, void of dread,
Viewing its image white.

Now bend thy bow, Sir Hubert, low,
And fix thy fatal dart,
With ruthless fingers, sure and slow,
Aim at yon 'fenceless heart,
Thou canst not fail. Nay, what can all
The stag? Great heav'ns! it turns—
Between its antlers, pure and pale,
A cross, mysterious burns!

A cross of gold, whereon, behold!
The bleeding Christ is hung!
—The hunter bold on the mossy mold
Hath bow and bugle flung;
And deadly white with sore affright,
He glares at the crucified—
The deep wounds glow, the blood-drop bow,
The sad Eyes open wide!

Yes open wide, all dim with death,
To pierce Sir Hubert's soul;
The heart is cleft in the mangled breast,
And the red drops downward roll!
"He bleeds! He dies!"—(the young knight cries,
Writhing in agony)
"O Lord! O Love! O Lamb Divine!
My sins have slaughtered Thee!

"Draw near, draw near, thou mystic deer!
Bearing thy burden sweet;
Bend to my lips thine antler-tips,
That I may kiss His feet;
Shed from those wounds a shower of blood
To cleans my soul defiled;
O Fair! O Good! lean from Thy rood,
And bless Thy guilty child?

Glowing with love's supreme desire,
Sir Hubert lifts his head;
Burns on his brow the sunset's fire,
He kneels with arms outspread,
He kneels, he turns, the stars dismayed—
He finds himself alone!
For lo! the milk-white stag hath fled—
The bleeding Christ is gone!

But clear and high from the rosy sky,
Seraphic voices ring—
"Thrice-happy Hubert! thou art nigh
The footstool of the King!
In this lone place, O child of grace!
Henceforth in penance bide;
Forsake the court, forego the chase,
And follow the crucified!"

Gavrel: A Glimpse of Polish Life

(CONCLUDED FROM LAST WEEK.)

"My dear mother's birthday."

"Was she born to-day? I thought you said she died."

"She was born to her new life in heaven this day," said Felicie smiling and looking upwards.

"Tell me about her," pleaded Gavrel. "But first I will see if my Dyada has come."

He ran out, but soon returned to say that there was no sign of his coming. He looked so sad and disappointed that Felicie began to tell him about her mother, while her fingers busily shaped flowers and leaves. The child listened in wonder to her talk of God and heaven and angels. To interest him more, she placed her favorite pictures before him, and he asked a thousand questions about the "Little Jesus," who interested him more than any of the others because He was made like himself. He was happy for a long while thus engaged, and was busily thinking how he could get his Dyada transformed into a carpenter like St. Joseph, and, if he could, how pleasantly they would work together.

Felicie did not know that he was thinking his own thoughts thus, and kept on talking of the Divine Lord and His Blessed Mother, describing the mission, and finally coming to the Last Supper and the Betrayal.

She was speaking in a soft, low voice that did not interfere with his own plans, till something made her appeal directly to him, and he had to answer. Then he listened more attentively and became aware that Felicie was speaking in a very sorrowful strain, telling how the foster-father was dead, and how the Child had grown to be a man, and how He was betrayed and condemned to die.

"This very little Jesus?" asked Gavrel, pointing to the picture.

"Yes," said Felicie; "this dear Lord was led away to be nailed on the cross."

"You wish to make me cry," he said. "I am afraid of you. Oh, do let me go to my own Dyada. He never made me cry."

Poor Felicie was struck with remorse. "How could I? How could I?" she asked herself. "O dear little lad, do not fear. How could I know that you had never learned the story before! Come, we will go together and see if Dyada has come."

No, he had not come, but Gavrel would not return with her. He chose to creep into his own cold bed and wait and watch.

Some hours later Felicie knocked softly at his door. There was no answer, and she said to herself: "He has come; they are both asleep."

The next morning she arose early and cleaned and dusted her little room, polished her chairs, or her one chair, and the chest of drawers whereon was piled her wealth of flowers. She then knelt and devoutly said her morning prayers. Some time afterwards she donned her ancient little cloak, and close black hood, tied a black shawl over it, and under her pretty little skin, took her beads and her prayer-book, and her bit of candle to light herself out of the dark hall, and hurried to church.

She had time to say a good many decades of her beads, and yet there was no sign of the doors being opened. She usually arrived before the time, so she thought nothing of that, but she began to feel the cold and got up off her knees to walk up and down to keep herself from freezing. It was very dark, but she fancied there was a figure of some kind in one corner, near the side door. She approached to assure herself, and lo! there all huddled up was little Gavrel, waiting to get into the church to warm himself.

"My Dyada said I might come," he pleaded in excuse.

"I should think you might, indeed," she answered, cheerily; "but you must have made a mistake, and got up too early. Wait—I will go and ask the gate porter to tell me what o'clock it is."

She hurried off and soon came running back. "A good hour yet, my dear. Come, we shall have plenty of time to get warm before mass begins. Let me run."

Gavrel could hardly move, he was so benumbed with cold; but she helped him, and unresistingly led him to her little room, and wrapped him up, and put him on the bed. He was soon asleep, and she left him there sleeping, and went to mass. He was still sleeping when she returned, and she sat down to her work, deferring the preparation of her breakfast till he should be awake to share it.

To pass the time she chanted to herself sacred hymns in low sweet tone—the dear old Polish hymns of long ago. Gavrel was awake and listening to her for a long time ere she was aware of it. He lost patience, and he seemed to have forgotten his fear of the night previous.

Before he could be prevailed upon to eat Gavrel went once more to look out for some signs of Dyada, but he came back with the same sad story, no sign of him. And so passed breakfast, dinner, supper; and in spite of the church music, his play with the schoolboys, and Felicie's stories, Gavrel could not for an instant forget that Dyada came not.

In the midst of the hilarious schoolboy game he would suddenly stop and look wistfully up the road by which the old man had departed. When the street lamps were lighted he crept into his cold little room and flung himself on the bed in a sort of dumb hopelessness. He did not cry, indeed Felicie learned later that he never cried. He had never been made to relieve his childish heart by tears or cries. When in pain or anger or grief, he hid his childish face and thought his thoughts out in dumb silence. She sought him even after nightfall and found him there, silent, cold, prostrate.

She had much ado to make him rise and accompany her, for he seemed to be almost too exhausted for the effort. He kept stumbling as he moved, his eyes fixed upon the door as if every slightest sound, [illegible] blew in upon him, put he only [illegible] suggestion had to be physically his own master and walk where they [illegible] an unwilling peasant. She [illegible] however, on making a little [illegible] responsibility, but it would [illegible] time to expel the cold and misery from the room.

When morning broke and she went to bring him to his breakfast she found him very feverish and ill. He staggered as he tried to follow her, and when the door was locked and he went to hide the great iron key as usual in his bosom, fearing that his protector was not sufficiently safe, he could not hold it, and in full view of a remonstrating voice, upon the stone floor.

"Let me put it away for you," said poor Felicie, who was really frightened at the sight of the poor lad.

"I promised not to part with it," he answered.

She helped him to put it away and then led him in and did what she could to make him comfortable. But he shivered sorely in spite of her ministrations, and before night he was delirious. Felicie was just putting on her black hood to run for help when a heavy step on the stone flags without and a heavy thump of a heavy stick against a door having been laid her that Dyada had come at last. Devout Catholic nothing. Felicie hurried out to prepare the old man for the sad news of his boy's illness.

"I feared it," he said. "You are the good flower-maiden, I know, and I thank you for all you have done for him. May I see him?"

She led him in. The old man had walked thirty miles that day, but this did not deter him from watching all night on the tender invalid, who at length emerged to recognize the touch of his grandfather's hand and murmur out "My Dyada."

The old man sleeps his head in [illegible] Felicie tried to [illegible] the melody was only a [illegible] he all right in a few days, but the [illegible] watcher was not deceived.

"Shall I tell you his story?"

"Thank you for pity sufficient," said Felicie.

"It is short," said the old man, "and not new. His mother was my niece, my only sister's child. A spoiled pretty child as ever lived, she threw over the [illegible] for him. She was their pride of our [illegible] innocent bright creature, and so [illegible] as the apple of [illegible] long ago. She had never said a word to a companion save the little children of our [illegible] till then. With them she danced and sang and played [illegible] they. So it was till the day [illegible] day, when a Russian regiment was quartered in our town, and three Russian soldiers billeted upon my sister.

"One of them, a handsome, daring fellow, won the child's affection. [illegible] her with him to the regimental chaplain, who was glad enough to marry them, for by the marriage my sister's [illegible] human name, all would pass into Russian hands, the being the only child of her widowed mother. Shortly [illegible] got, or never knew, that, should she ever have a child of her own, it would have to be of its father's faith.

"So it was. This is her child."

He went away and looked down upon the boy, who was tossing restlessly upon his bed.

"The villain borrowed money on every hand," continued the old man, opening wide and again looking down upon the little flower-maiden, who [illegible] the points of a rose with her [illegible] fingers. Borrowed money on his wife's prospective inheritance, drank it, gambled it away, and then deserted her and her child in some Russian town, to which he had [illegible] himself transferred on purpose to separate her from her people. My sister never got here to march of her, not knowing I was paralyzed. She knew I loved her always in spite of all. [illegible] had to take her to the hospital before long—her health was broken. She [illegible] and he kept life they had to bring [illegible] in our own faith.

"Keep him and love him is all that I could do. To teach him anything would be a capital offence. Not that I hesitated for my own sake; but, had I attempted it, he would have been taken from me. How they may assign him at any moment. Though I am ready to lay down my life for him, yet I know that they will force me to give him up now that she has gone."

"Has she gone?" asked Felicie softly.

"Yes, she is at rest. Yesterday morn they heaped the cold clods of earth upon her. I saw it thankfully. Poor wreck of our care, bright little girl."

The old man went back to the bed and sank down beside it. Felicie watched on in silence.

Thus one day and night, then many days and nights of anxious watching before Gavrel awoke to recognize his Dyada and smile upon him. But he did so at last.

"Who is she?" he asked, pointing to Felicie.

"That is good Felicie, who has saved your life."

"Good Felicie," said Gavrel, thoughtfully, "yes—I remember her; she told me stories of the Christ Child, and wanted to make me cry, but I ran away."

"She has been very good to you," said Dyada.

"Has she been good to you?" questioned Gavrel.

"Yes, indeed, my dear one; better than I can say.

"Then she may finish the story," said Gavrel; I will hear all from good Felicie."

"Did she tell you that the rich people brought cake and sugar, and lots of good things to her mother when she was dead?"

The old man shook his head.

"She told me," said Gavrel. "Do you think she wanted them, my Dyada?"

"Who, dear?"

"Why, the dead mother."

"She wanted nothing more, my [illegible]