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Thirst in the Desert

My wagon was outspanned in a rock-strewn valley at the foot of a ridge of low hills and the oxen had been tied up for the night. I sat on a rock by the roadside, smoking a comfortless pipe.

I knew that the girl who occupied my wagon tent was weeping, and I longed to comfort her in her desolation. But what could I say—I who was but a clumsy fellow at putting his thoughts into words at the best, of times! And if I had had whole dictionaries of fine words at my command, they would not have made less awful the thing that had happened. If I had been a woman or an old friend I might have stayed beside her, held her hand in mine and wiped away her tears. But I was neither. Indeed, though I loved her more than anything else on earth, I was little more than a stranger whose presence would seem an intrusion. Her tears would ease her sore heart better than any halting words of mine, but the knowledge that she was shedding them alone in the darkness turned my heart to a lump of smarting pain.

I had met Cecile Gunther for the first time a month ago, when I had crossed into German territory from Griqualand. I had learned to love her in the week I had spent at her father's station; but she was not the sort of girl to whom a man may venture to speak of love after a week's acquaintance. So I had kept silence and gone away, meaning to make a longer stay with the hospitable old German on my return. Meantime, Witbooi and his Hotentots had risen against German authority, and when I again reached Gunther's Station it was to find a heap of smoking ruins and Cecile weeping over the mutilated body of her father.

Together we laid the old man in the grave I hastily dug. Then I placed the heart-broken girl in my wagon and hurried with all speed to the border.

This had happened five days ago. I no longer had any fear of falling in with a rowing band of Witbooi's followers, yet my heart was heavy, for I knew that there lay in wait an enemy still more to be feared. We were in the heart of a desert land and for miles on miles about us stretched nothing but flinty ridges, waterless dongas and thorny scrub. Even the silver light of the newly-risen moon had no power to soften the gaunt hideousness of the scene. The desolation and solitude were profoundly depressing. Worse than either was the silence—the awful brooding silence of the desert, unbroken by cry of bird or chirp of insect.

But it was neither the silence nor the solitude which daunted me, but the fear—nay, for the last few hours it had been a certainty—that I had lost my way. The worthless Griqua who had guided me into Damaraland had deserted me, and I had no one to trust but myself. Unfortunately for myself and those who depended upon me, I was not blessed, as are so many South Africans, with an abnormally developed bump of locality.

In most parts of the country to have wandered twenty or thirty miles out of the way would have meant only inconvenience and delay in one of its cruelest forms. My oxen had not tasted water for twenty-four hours, and our own supply was limited to a few pints barely enough to make our breakfast coffee in the morning. I grew sick as I reflected upon what must inevitably happen should we fail to reach a village or a water hole before tomorrow's sunset. I shuddered and let my pipe go out. Then, realizing the folly and uselessness of thus meeting trouble half way, I rolled myself up in my rug and lay down upon the warm sand and tried to sleep.

But deep anxiety would not suffer me to rest. I rose and began to pace up and down, listening to the heavy breathing of the tired oxen and experiencing a chill creeping of the flesh whenever one of the poor beasts uttered a low distressed bellow. For the sound was ominous. Already they were suffering, and

upon their lives and strength our own depended.

Soon the tent sail was drawn aside and Miss Gunther stepped down from the wagon and came toward me. Her face was white as marble in the moonlight, and to my fancy it was beautiful as an angel's.

"Let me walk with you," she said, "I can bear this awful loneliness no longer."

For answer I folded about her shoulders the scarf she carried and fell into step with her. Any other man would have found twenty kind and appropriate things to say, but I found none. It has always been my fate to become possessed of a dumb devil when I most desire to be eloquent.

"You could not sleep either," she said of length, "although you must be very tired. I know what it is that keeps you wakeful. You fear we have lost our way."

I had intended to keep her in ignorance of our unenviable situation as long as possible—but I could not lie to her, I bowed my head.

"How did you know?" I asked.

"I have watched your face all day and I have read doubt and apprehension in it. When you outspanned tonight I guessed the truth. I felt sure if you had known where water was to be found you would have traveled on until you reached it instead of stopping here."

"You are right. I do not know in the least in what direction to search for water. And if it is not found by this time—tomorrow—"

"We will not carry tomorrow's burdens while it is today," she interrupted gently, "nor will we take the gloomiest view of the situation. We have not yet prayed as we should have done. We shall find water, never fear."

"It is kind of you to give me encouragement when I deserve only reproaches," I answered. "If you have to suffer through my fault—"

"But she would not hear me out. 'It will not be through your fault if I suffer,' she said, 'nor will my sufferings be greater than your own or those of your servants. Should God permit us to experience the worst, I am not afraid for myself, but it pains me to know how greatly my presence here adds to your difficulties and anxieties.'"

I opened my lips to reply but closed them again. Not for the want of words this time, but lest I might utter those for which this was neither a fitting time nor place. She read my thoughts and her pale face flushed. She returned to the wagon, first bidding me lie down and rest. Instead of obeying her, I saddled my horse and rode away.

Taking the Southern Cross for my guide, I directed my course due south in the hope of striking some donga or channel leading towards the Orange River. Even should it be dry we might obtain water by digging. In this I was disappointed, though I rode many miles. The earth might have been a wrung sponge for any trace of moisture it exhibited. Tired and heart-sick I returned to camp long after midnight.

Next morning the sun rose like a ball of fire above the flinty ridges. By seven o'clock the heat was intolerable, but I ordered my boys to inspan, and we started on again immediately after breakfast. If I had had any faint hope remaining that after all I might be on the right track, it soon died out. The country grew more savage and sterile with every mile we passed. Still we struggled doggedly on till in the middle of a deep sandy valley, one of the oxen fell down on the yoke with a hoarse bellow of pain.

I sprang from the wagon and helped the boys to get the animal upon its feet again, then quickly unyoked the others.

To be continued

The Irish, English, French and Spanish Bishops will make their official ad limina visit to Rome in the course of this year.

Hon. W. Bourke Cochran and Shane Leslie spoke on St. Patrick's Day in Chicago.

Catholic News Notes

The Sacred Congregation of Rites will, on April 16, hold the preparatory meeting on the virtues of the venerable John Neumann, C.S.S.R., fourth Bishop of Philadelphia, whose cause of beatification is now pending. On April 30 the ordinary meeting will take place.

Very Rev. John J. Hollara, rector of St. Patrick Church, York, Pa., and chancellor of the Diocese of Harrisburg, died at St. Joseph Hospital, Lancaster, after a prolonged illness. The immediate cause of his death was a cancer of the left side, for which he underwent an operation about three months ago. He was born in Lykens, Pa., in 1836 and was ordained by Bishop McGovern in 1889.

Brother Frederick Montgomery who last year was associated with the faculty of St. Xavier College, Louisville, Ky., died recently at Wheeling, W. Va., of typhoid fever. He was related to the late Archbishop Montgomery of San Francisco.

The new school of St. Peter at Steubenville, O., has opened with a splendid attendance. It was recently completed at a cost of \$25,000. It is modern in construction, fire-proof, and heated by the latest system and excellently lighted.

Mother Mary Xavier Mehegan, Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity, convent of St. Elizabeth Madison, N. J., celebrated a few days ago the sixty-fifth anniversary of her becoming a nun.

In Milwaukee 100 ladies, as a 100 club, have each pledged themselves to raise \$100 to help pay off the Cathedral debt.

Twenty years ago, on March 27, 1892, Archbishop Messmer was consecrated Bishop of Green Bay. Eleven years later he was appointed Archbishop of Milwaukee.

Mgr. O'Hern, vice-rector of the American College, Rome, has sailed from New York on his return home.

In the great fire in Houston, Texas, the church of St. Patrick, presbytery, and parish buildings were totally destroyed.

A new church, dedicated to St. Florian, is to be erected at West Milwaukee, by Father Pacificus Raith, of the Capuchins. The new congregation consists almost entirely of Germans.

Rev. Charles F. Kavanaugh, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, had been made a Domestic Prelate. He was the late Archbishop Ryan's secretary.

By the will of the late Mrs. Madeline Bain, of Kenosha, Wis., the Josephinum, Columbus, O., will receive a bequest of \$13,000.

The non-Catholics of Boston, regardless of creed, presented Cardinal O'Connell with an illuminated address inclosed in a gold casket.

Sister Gertrude, superior of St. Catherine's Home, invited the Catholic ladies of Milwaukee to meet the Archbishop at the Home to talk over the plans for the betterment and enlargement of the institution. About twenty ladies were present.

Huylers, 44-46 East Main St.

Easter Novelties, large and small. Chicks, ducks, baskets and crates of eggs. Paper Eggs from 50 cents up. Handsome satin eggs, hand painted, 50 cents up. Price includes filling. Cotton Ducks all sizes and prices. Rabbits, Baby Bunnings, Chicks on Boxes, Cross Boxes, Beautiful trimmed Baskets, all colors, satin boxes. Delivered to any part of the city. Boxes and candy packed for expressing.

News From Ireland

The late J. Severson of Lisburn left estate valued at \$8,150.

Now that there is so much talk about Home Rule it may be of interest to know, says the "Lancaster Leader" that it is an historic fact that an Anglo-Norman Parliament was held in Castle Dermot in the reign of Henry IX.

It is expected that the tenants in the village of Kinsaleek will soon sign agreements for the purchase of their holdings.

J. Connelley, Esq., has been elected clerk of the late 'Clare District Assizes'.

The death took place on Feb. 2 of Michael Harrahan, merchant, Kilmurray McMahon.

A shocking fatality occurred at Mill street railway station, Cork. The victim, named Timothy Fitzpatrick, aged 70, a farmer.

The death occurred on Feb. 10 of Rev. Bernard O'Loughlin, P. P., Desertmartin.

The death took place recently of Patrick McGovern of Carrick Glenawilly. Deceased was a true Nationalist.

Glenties Guardians have appointed Dr. J. J. McNelis medical officer of the Glenties dispensary district.

The late A. B. Moore, of Bangor left personal estate valued at \$3,585, all of which he bequeathed to his wife.

The death has taken place in Dublin on February 18, of Wm. Myers, for close on thirty years a popular inspector in the fire department of Dublin.

T. B. Griffin has been elected chairman of the Galway County Council.

Lord Glanricarde refused the offer of the C. D. Board for his estate, and the compulsory powers are to be put in force.

The sale to the tenants on very favorable terms of the Winn estate, Glenbeigh, is announced.

It is rumored that the Right Rev. Dr. Mannix, president of Maynooth College, is the first of the three names to be submitted to the Holy See for the appointment of a coadjutor to the Archbishop of Melbourne.

Martin Galvin, Clara, aged 77 years has been elected master of Tullamore Union.

Peter Peck of New York was a visitor to his old home near Carrick-on-Shannon recently.

Thomas Lenihan, of the Irish Land Commission, has made a final inspection of the agricultural holdings in Glm.

The death took place in Dublin recently of Sister Angela of the Presentation Order in Drogheda.

A special court was held in Kiltinagh, on February 12, at which Thomas Casey, water bailiff, was sent for trial charged with fatally wounding John Kelly on January 19.

Messrs. Keapock, Clare & Co., auctioneers, Navan, put up for sale at their salerooms, on Feb. 14, a farm of land at Curraghtown. John McDermott of Bracetown, Navan, was declared purchaser at £200.

Mrs. Bridget Ryan, Ballysorrill Templemore, who was evicted a couple of months ago, has been reinstated.

Knights of Columbus. The first Degree will be exemplified on Monday evening, March 25th, at 8.30 p. m.

Enticing Competitions

The program of competitions for this year's Oireachtas which has just been published in booklet form shows that the Committee in charge intend to afford every encouragement to competitors. It is well worth the perusal of all and will convince the most indifferent that the men and women of the Irish revival are no mere faddists but practical beings who are resolved that the country shall work out its destiny in its own way, unfettered and untrammelled by outside influences.

The literary section in particular is of engrossing interest and caters for the varied tastes of all writers. A large number of subjects are offered, and it is difficult to choose. The subjects are chosen with a view to the earnest consideration of the Irish people. Too often our deliberations are conducted in English and there can be no doubt that a contest in Irish would result in more thinking and in a more steadfastness being kept on the occasion of our own country. The efforts of the Oireachtas Committee to give our language a marked tendency towards the preserving of every support.

For the best book in Irish published during 1912, a competition of £30 is being offered. When one considers the difficulties in the matter of publication which beset an author it will be seen how tempting this prize will be. The number who send publications in Irish is still limited, and those who try to increase our literary output should be helped in every way. It requires courage and perseverance to work in the untilled field and to place one's thoughts before the public clothed in a language which has been proscribed for centuries. But far more important than the monetary value of the prize will be the healthy rivalry aroused amongst the different authors as to whom shall win the Oireachtas ribbon and the fact that the Gaelic League is not unmindful of the writers' labors will be a further incentive to place of their best before the public.

The writing of a three-act play is an ambitious undertaking. To write one in which the interest is never allowed to flag, in which the sequence is preserved, and above all which is true to life is no mean achievement. One's power of delineation must be more than those of the mere novice. That the production of such works in Irish will materially help the language movement is a certainty. Generous prizes are being offered in this competition, and there is no limit as to subject. All who desire writing on a historical one have sufficient material on which to draw. Our history teems with suffering episodes, and we shall be grateful to the playwrights who place them before us in dramatic form.

Present-day Ireland is full of vigor and charm, with its various movements making for a more ideal national life and the keen observer can easily find themes on which to found a powerful drama. It may be one ridiculing our shortcomings and endeavoring to make us scorn them, or it may simply deal with social life in a light fashion. As long as it is true to life it will deserve our applause and will hearten us in our struggles. Our dramatists may rely on an appreciative audience, an audience thirsting for native dramatic art. Let us hope that the three will be soon slaked, and that the Oireachtas of 1912 will be the means of excellent dramatic work being written.

So far we have only dealt with two competitions. They however give some idea of the nature of the program. Not the shirking of five questions, but the grappling with them in all cases seems to be the keynote. All our writers should be up and doing. No time should be lost. We are engaged in the rebuilding of the national edifice, and no material, however precious, should be spared. We should all contribute of the best.