

"Never can they live at the pier end there till the priest gets out to join them."

"The priest?" repeated the Englishman, thinking the wind had miscarried his companion's meaning.

"Aye, the priest," returned Barble. "What else would bring ten men in their sense over from Irishbeg this night?"

He turned quickly and disappeared in the darkness, and L'Estrange guessed that he had gone to where the parochial house stood in some pretence at shelter.

He had learned long ago that Catholics wish for the presence of the priest to help a passing soul into eternity, but he never realised before how universally, even in the face of almost unsurmountable difficulties, that presence was sought.

It seemed madness even to try to reach the boat that tossed just beyond the pier, much less to board her and turn again into the storm. Yet sooner than he would have thought possible Barble, with half a dozen others, were back at the pier head again, and from the lanterns some of them held he could see a tall figure in black tarpaulin and close-fitting sou'wester standing whilst a rope was firmly fastened round it. L'Estrange knew intuitively it was the priest. A momentary lull enabled the little band to make their way to where the boat tossed and strained against the determined efforts of the rowers to keep her from destruction.

Coming nearer, they threw out a line. The priest took it, winding it around his body. Then he dropped down as the boat waited for him. He loosed the rope afterward, and the men on the pier would have hauled it in, only there seemed some hitch or delay. Then they saw that one of the boat's crew was coming ashore in place of the priest. As he reached the pier L'Estrange, by some act of Providence, being nearest the boat, heard a groan of pain, and the hands of the sailor as he grasped them were wet and warm with blood. L'Estrange understood then that this man, hurt by some accident, was of no use in the boat, and that they were waiting because they needed another rower.

Barble, the next man to L'Estrange, was the father of a family; so, too, was the next beyond. L'Estrange was not a good seaman, but he was a strong rower. Further, he had neither wife nor child to leave.

There was hardly time even for this to shape itself in his brain. He scarcely knew that he had decided to go when he felt the rope in his hands, saw for an instant the tossing depths beneath him. Then strong arms caught and held him, and he was in the boat.

The priest facing him was young, boyish, almost too young, too boyish, he had carelessly thought, to be the pastor of strong men's souls. But his face was white, determined, and his jaw was set. In his eyes was a strange light—excitement, perhaps, but certainly not fear. Young as he was, this was not the first midnight struggle he had had with the sea, but to-night, as before, he carried his passport of safety on his heart.

Down went the boat, green walls of water before her and behind appeared, and nothing

was left of the sky but a narrow ribbon of black overhead. The Englishman, straining every nerve at the clumsy oar which he shared with one of the islanders, had no time for thought. Even afterwards everything seemed to him like a shapeless dream. Once even the helmsman faltered. The last wave nearly swamped them with a return of foam, and a rower from either side was forced to abandon his oar. From the white faces and distended eyes of the men about him L'Estrange realised that this was a greater peril than they had ever braved before.

"Steady, boys!" above the storm the priest's voice rose. Then he pulled himself upright, and even now no fear was in his eyes, though his face was white. "Remember, we cannot go down. Have you forgotten we are not alone?"

All except L'Estrange understood. With a stifled sob the helmsman turned again to crest the breaker. For an instant they spun up in the air a blurred black mass, then a collection of moving lights appeared in the darkness ahead, and the men knew their journey's end was near, and they felt assured of safety now, though only certain knowledge and skill could have taken the boat up to the only possible landing place.

But before they touched the land twenty men were in the water at their sides, half drowned by the swirling foam, to meet and welcome the priest. They seized the boat, and the exhausted rowers sat at rest. High up onto the shingle they dragged her, and suddenly Hugh L'Estrange was aware that he alone of all those present was not bare-headed and on his knees.

Between two rows of kneeling figures, women bowed down and men bareheaded, the priest passed up to the rough-built quay. He was in time, they told him. Some impulse bade L'Estrange to follow him to the house of the man who lay dying. They said that for hours he had been calling in agony for the priest. Now he was calm and content: his prayer had been answered.

L'Estrange saw the priest bend over the bed, saw those who had been waiting keen

back until he drew himself upwards again, felt himself pressing forward, kneeling with the others; saw the flash of a silver case as the priest drew something from his breast.

*Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi, custodiat animam tuam in vitam eternam. Amen.*

Then Hugh L'Estrange understood. It was not for the priest alone: it was for what he brought with him, for the Master, in whose name he had power to forgive sin, that Catholics pray all their lives long. The dying man was at rest, and, half turning to those who had risked their lives to secure for their comrade what he had so passionately craved, the priest raised his hand in a final blessing.

Thus a third time a Catholic called down the blessing of God on Hugh L'Estrange.

Those of his colleagues who were present when George, the Lancastrian, had been allowed to keep the faith of his fathers declared themselves not in the least surprised when they heard that Hugh L'Estrange had been received into the Catholic Church. To others the news of his conversion came as a nine days' wonder. But to no one was the wonder of it all so deep or so lasting as to the man himself. Faith had come to him in the midst of the blindest ignorance. As a child he had to learn the catechism from its first pages. On one point only he needed no teaching. He knew that God the Son was truly present in the sacrament of the altar, and that light made everything clear.

In the boat on the open sea, in the island cabin, with the storm still raging without, the faith of priest and people had shown him a reflex of heaven's light. And knowing himself, with a sudden, overwhelming knowledge, to be in the presence of Jesus Christ, he had understood that this was the fulfilment of his first two Catholic blessings. The blessing of God had indeed attended him, and here, unexpectedly as to form and place, the reward of God had come upon him. It would lead him, God willing, some day to die at peace, with the assurance of forgiveness for the past, and happiness for the future on the lips of the priest at his side.

## The End of a Famous Newspaper

(By W.D.E. in the London *Catholic Times*.)

On Friday, December 19, the Dublin *Freeman's Journal* was published for the last time. Many who did not share the views it represented, and among them even some as remote from them as Ulster Toryism with a decidedly Orange tinge, must have heard the news with regret. For the *Freeman* at one time had many friends and readers even in the camps opposed to it, and there were times when it was able, day after day, to give its readers news that could be found nowhere else.

For years during the land struggle in Ireland and Gladstone's campaign for Home Rule it was filed side by side with the *Times* in many an editor's office in Fleet Street.

It was a veteran of journalism, twenty-four years senior to the *Times* itself. Its

first number was issued in the summer of 1763, and its record is the story of 161 years. When it first appeared there was only one other newspaper in Dublin, a sheet bearing the old-world title of *Saunders's News Letter*, founded in 1743, which survived till 1879. Rumor said that in its last year the *News Letter's* issues were almost limited to the voucher copies sent out to its advertisers. The *Freeman's Journal* started with the advantage of what later proved to be a telling title, though at first, I believe, its significance was intended to be based neither on Liberal nor patriotic ideals, but on the narrower profession of guarding and promoting the interests of those who enjoyed the electoral franchise, the "freemen" of Dublin city. It was later on that it became

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