

Stories of the Confessional

Every one who has lived long in the south of Europe knows how amusing and innocent anecdotes of the confessional abound there, anecdotes which reflect neither upon priest nor penitent, yet which have the peculiarly piquant flavor—inherent in a joke which touches though never so lightly—upon forbidden subjects.

One of these was told to the writer by an earnest, active priest, unsparring of himself and of others. Padre— is from the north of Italy, and quite unused to the unspeakable and unconquerable laziness of the Roman peasant. It happened therefore, that on the occasion of the first confession it fell to his lot to hear after his appointment to the church of San—, in Rome, he was astonished to find that it behooved him to do the penitent's work as well as his own, and that he had to question and suggest and question again until fairly wearied out. So, being a conscientious man, he called the peasant back after he had given him absolution, and said, "You must come better prepared next time. You must see that to-day it was I who made the confession, and not you. You had evidently made no examination of conscience; and so I warn you the next time you come I shall ask you nothing until you yourself have begun your confession. It is your duty to think over all you have done and left undone, and to make your own examination of conscience; then I can aid you with questions; but it is not right or for your good that I should do it all." The peasant sulked and shuffled, but made no reply to this harangue. However, it was not very long before he came again, and Padre—, who is nothing if not thorough, placed his watch before him, and allowed himself twenty minutes to wait for the confession to begin. The minute-hand crept round to five minutes,—ten,—fifteen,—seventeen,—when the penitent said, in an injured and irritated tone, "Ebbene tu non mi dice niente?" ("Well, have you got nothing at all to say to me?")

Quite different was good and gentle Father O'B—'s method of procedure. He was never in Rome, and lived and died in the great republic. His penitents used to say of him that if they confessed any sin he was wont to say hastily, in a distressed tone of voice, "There, mee chyeld, there! I know ye didn't mane to do it. Pass on to the next p'int."

"Oh, yes, but I did intend to do it. I did it knowingly, Father O'B—."

"Oh, mee chyeld, I hope not. I hope ye didn't,—for that would be decayful, ye know, and unkind. I think ye didn't mane to do it. Pass on to the next p'int mee chyeld."

Even a better story is told of Father McB—, a Dominican monk, and a good, energetic, but absent-minded man. It fell to his lot to return to Ireland after an absence of many years, and to hear confessions on saint's day in the chapel of a small village in the neighborhood of Cork. Several of the villagers had already confessed and were kneeling quietly in church, waiting for mass to begin, when the door of the adjoining chapel (where Father McB— heard confessions) burst in, and the good father rushed in, his habit flying behind him, exclaiming in a loud voice, "Every one who has confessed to me this morning and that 'flayed the shingle over the roof' last night must come back to me directly!"

When the morning services were over, some one ventured to inquire, "What was the matter with Father McB—, now?"

"Faix," said Barney O'Brien, the village me'er-do-well, with a twinkling eye, "faix, I'm just thinkin' it's meself then, I'd made me confession like the rest of ye; and as to what I said, that's neither here or there, but I'm willin' to tell ye all that I wound it up wid sayin' 'that I'd flayed the shingle over the roof.'—'What's that?' says Father McB—, with a start that had like to make him fly out of the confessional.—'Well, thin, yer riverence,' says I, 'it just manes that I got roarin' drunk night before last.' And thin, 'Wait a bit,' says he, and flies into the church as if the devil himself was behind. It's a— onaisy pinnace he's put on me," continued Barney, with a rueful countenance; "and I can only hope the rist of ye has got the like,—for ye know we flayed the shingle together, boys."

Spanish literature abounds with drool confessional stories. The best, probably, is that of a gypsy, who, coming to confess, and finding the priest's gold watch and chain lying in a room adjoining the confessional, coolly pocketed it, and began his confession with, "Father, I once stole a watch and chain."

"Very well, my son," replied the priest; "then you must restore it to its owner."

"Do you want it?" answered the gypsy.

"No, certainly not," said the priest.

"But, father," continued the gypsy, "I offered the watch and chain to their owner, and he refused to accept them."

"And you confessed the theft to the owner?" persisted the priest.

"Oh, yes, father."

"And still he refused to accept the watch and chain?"

"Yes, father, he refused absolutely."

"Then, my son, you may keep them with a clear conscience. Go in peace."

The Provengal stories are rather more irreverent. The most amusing and famous is called "The Turtle-Dove's Nest," and is as follows:

"Poor Alari de Gigoundas, who is something of a simpleton, went to confession. When he had finished, the priest said as usual, 'Now, my son, collect your thoughts and reflect whether you have confessed everything.'

"Monsieur le cure, I don't remember—"

"Come, my son, courage; tell everything you know; do not fear—"

"Well, Monsieur le cure, if I must tell you everything, I have found a turtle-dove's nest, full of young doves; it is mine—"

"I hope you didn't steal it?" interrupted the priest.

"Steal it? oh, no, Monsieur le cure; but I found it; it is in the olive orchard of Peruttils, on the fifth tree of the second row; and I shall have a fine set of doves to sell."

"The next day it happened that some children who were playing in the olive-orchard caught sight of the nest, stole some doves and killed others, and tore the nest to

pieces; so that when poor Alari came to see his treasure, as he did daily, doves and nest were gone.

"But who has taken my nest? Oh, my poor nest! Who has spoiled my nest?" cried the simpleton. "Oh, sacred name of heaven! it can only have been Monsieur le cure!"

"When Christmas came round, however, Alari went again to confession, and again the priest said, 'Now, my son, collect your thoughts and tell all you have done.'

"Mon pere, I have been making love—"

"With a view to getting married?" interrupted the priest.

"Oh, yes, Mon pere; what else should I make love for? She is a good girl, and a pretty, and—"

"And of this village?"

"But here Alari's patience failed. 'Ah, cousin of a cure, do you think that I will tell you who and where she is?' he cried. 'Last Easter I confessed to you that I knew where a turtle-dove's nest was, and you robbed my nest and killed my doves. If you should kill my Anois!'"

Of a different color is the following story, also Provengal:

"Every one in Carcassonne and the arrondissement loved the good Abbe Radoni, and rejoiced at the sight of his tall figure, wren's coat, and big hat, as he came walking along with great strides, having a friendly word and smile for every one, bonbons for the children, and ready sympathy in joy or sorrow for all who claimed it. At the bedside he was gay and simple as a child; before the altar, solemn and serious as an archangel. He was a true priest *du Bon Dieu*, such as are only made by suffering and conquest of earthly affections and appetites and by fasting and prayer."

Good and patient as he was, however, there was a fault for which the Abbe found no pardon. He hated gossip as he hated the devil, and when in the course of a confession a penitent happened to reveal the faults of another, the grated window of the confessional box would slam sharply, and the Abbe would say sternly, 'You have discharged your own load. Leave your neighbors to discharge theirs.'

"Now, it happened that one day when he had confessed a great many penitents, a certain *Mise Tres-Estelle*, a rich *bourgeoise* of Carcassonne, presented herself and began a confession which was endless, and which dealt—as was the good lady's wont—with the peccatilloes of all the arrondissement. Rang went the grating of the confessional, with the customary exordium. *Mise Tres-Estelle*, very angry and humiliated, resolved to leave the Abbe Radoni from that time forth, and therefore presented herself at the confessionals of several other churches in Carcassonne with a tale of her wrongs. Everywhere, however, the grating of the confessional was shut in her face, so that after a time she returned to her own parish. The good Abbe heard her confession and gave her absolution in a quiet matter-of-course way, as if nothing had happened. This mortified her pride extremely, and, meeting him the next day in front of the cathedral, she said graciously, 'I hope, Father Radoni, you were not offended that I went to another confessor?'

"Not at all, my child; not at all."

"But why, *Mon pere*?"

"Eh, my child, if you had a neighbor who was in the habit of strewing ashes in front of your door, and it pleased her suddenly to change and strew them in front of your neighbor's door, would you be offended? Neither am I offended that you chose another confessor."

Once a simpleton, who had been in the idiot-asylum near Arles, was engaged as a servant by a charitable lady. It pleased her one day to go to confession, and the priest, to whom she was a stranger, began with the inquiry, "Are you maid, wife, or widow?"

"Newsi, answered poor Catharine."

"Are you married?"

"Newsi."

"Unmarried, then?"

"Newsi."

"A widow?"

"Newsi."

"Then what is heaven's name are you?" said the priest, losing patience.

"An idiot and an orphan, please your riverence."

Selling a Wife.

Some time ago a sensation was caused in the coal-mining district of Eusbon, North Wales, by the elopement of a miner with the wife of his comrade. It was ultimately discovered that after some wandering the pair had settled in the colliery district of Tyldesley, Lancashire. From this place the following letter has been received by the deserted husband: "Are you willing to give Sarah up into my hands, to take her as my own wife, and to marry her? for I have asked her many times to go back, and she answers every time, 'I would rather suffer death.' So you now understand she will not come back. Therefore, if you are willing, kindly wire a note signed by your own hand stating you are willing for me to make her a comfortable home and the children, and I will forward you ten shillings in cash for New Year's gift after you do me that kindness." The husband has replied, stating that matters having reached such a climax, his correspondent is welcome to his wife at the price named.—*St. James's Gazette*.

Fortunes in Germany.

What does *Vanity Fair* mean by stating that "large fortunes are rare in Germany?" On the contrary, there is no country where there are so many large fortunes among "the territorial aristocracy." In Germany proper there are twenty-six estates which are larger than any in Great Britain, with the exception of the duke of Sutherland's domain; but an enormous number of acres of his Scotch estate are a trackless waste. The landed possessions of Prince Schwartzenberg (in Austria and Hungary) covered 420 German square miles, Prince Liechtenstein's extend over 104 square miles, Prince Esterhazy's 80, and Count Schoborn's 60. There are numerous estates of 50 square miles. *Vanity Fair* is quite mistaken, too, in stating that Count Rodessa "made his fortune in the service of the court," and the said fortune, instead of being £1,500,000, considerably exceeds £3,000,000.—*London World*.

One of the surest ways to lose your health is to keep drinking other people's.

A SCRAP OF PAPER.

How it Convicted a man of Murder—A Remarkable True Story.

"Speaking of circumstantial evidence," a gentleman from Contra Costa county yesterday, to a reporter of the *Independent*, with whom he had been talking about the Marked murder trial, calls to my mind the conviction of Robert Lyle in my county, last January, of the murder of Patrick Sullivan, and I consider it the strangest case, and one on which there was the best detective work done that it was ever my fortune to meet with. It is a famous case, and has occupied the courts since the year 1881, and gave the officers more trouble to secure a conviction than a dozen ordinary murder cases. They had hardly anything to work on at first, but stuck to it with the persistence of bloodhounds on the track of a victim, finally securing a conviction almost wholly on the finding of a small piece of newspaper."

The reporter became interested and suggested that the gentleman give an account of the affair, which he did in the following language.

THE CRIME.

Sullivan was a prosperous farmer and stock-raiser, living on Wildcat Creek, in the southern part of Contra Costa county, and Lyle was a near neighbor. The latter was always getting into trouble with his neighbors and going to law, particularly with Sullivan. In these suits he was generally on the wrong side of the question, and, of course, got worsted, which enraged him to such a degree that he was injudicious enough to make threats against Sullivan's life, at one time telling the latter's son that his father would fail to come home some night. On the morning of the day of the murder Sullivan left his home with his team and went to town, where he had a trifling lawsuit with Lyle before a justice of the peace, in which he was beaten. The prophecy was fulfilled, for Sullivan never returned home alive. The next day he was found dead with his team in a field not far from his home, his arm hanging over the whiffletree and his body lying upon the ground. The first conclusion was that the team had run away with him, thrown him out, dragged him and broken his neck. This theory was strengthened by the fact that there was a plainly-marked trail for two hundred and fifty yards, evidently made by his body. No marks of blood were on his clothes, and no evidence that a crime had been committed. At the inquest when the clothes of the dead man were removed, it was found that he had been murdered by some one who had

SHOT HIM IN THE BACK.

Several of the shots had entered his body, one of them penetrating the heart and two of them imbedding themselves in the back of the wagon seat. I attended the trial and took a great interest in it. He was heard to pass the house of a man named Davis about nine o'clock on the night of the murder. The road passed the house of Lyle, so that if the latter so desired he could lie in ambush and kill him.

"When the officers examined the spot where the murder was committed they found the footprints of a man leading to and from Lyle's house over the ploughed ground to the place where Sullivan had fallen out of the wagon. They at once suspected that Lyle had something to do with the crime, and went to his house, where he was found eating his dinner. They told him that he was suspected of murder, and that they were there to make an investigation. 'I have expected this,' said Lyle, 'because I have had so much difficulty with Sullivan.' He then told the officers to go ahead and make their search and that they would not find anything incriminating about his place. On two pegs on the wall the officers found a double-barreled shot gun, one of the barrels of which was moist on the inside, and had evidently been recently discharged. Some buckshot was found, although Lyle denied having any, and on a shelf by the buckshot was found a crumpled piece of the *San Francisco Call*, a part of which was torn off. Lyle was arrested and lodged in jail at Martinez, after which one of the officers took the prisoner's boots and went to the scene of the supposed ambush, where he found in the brush alongside the road the imprints of a man's knees. The boots were found

TO FIT THE TRACKS

in the soft ground perfectly, and at this stage of the investigation the Alameda officers offered to hand over the case to the Contra Costa officers, but were detailed by the District Attorney to work it up.

"The officer continued the weaving of the chain of circumstantial evidence, and again returned to the scene of the murder. He went to the place where the tracks of the man's knees had been found, and about thirty feet from that spot found a small piece of paper that had evidently been used as wadding for a gun. It was a bit of newspaper, crumpled and powder-burned, but not be plainly read. At the trial the business manager of the *Call* identified the piece of paper as a part of an advertisement that had been printed in the paper on the same day and date as the paper found in Lyle's house. This little innocent-looking piece of paper was what completed the chain of circumstantial evidence, and consigned Lyle to San Quentin. It was further shown that on the night of the murder, between the hours of eight and nine o'clock, a woman's screams and entreaties had been heard issuing from Lyle's house. It is supposed that it was Mrs. Lyle, who knew that her husband was starting out to kill Sullivan, and tried to prevent his going. Notwithstanding the plain evidence in the case, it took three trials to convict the cold-blooded murderer, and the last jury found him guilty of murder in the first degree, a verdict that caused great dissatisfaction. I don't generally believe in hanging a man on circumstantial evidence, but that chain was so strong that no doubt could be entertained of his guilt. As a strange case it beats anything in California's circumstantial history."

It is not the necessities of life that cost much, but the luxuries; and it is with the major part of mankind as it was with the Frenchman who said that if he had the luxuries of life, he could dispense with the necessities. Mere living is cheap, but as the hymnologist says, "It is not all of life to live."

HOW BAKER WAS DEFEATED.

Cowardice of the Egyptians—Graphic Description of the Battle.

Full details are given by the London papers of the defeat of Baker Pasha, briefly reported by cable. It appears that on Sunday evening, Feb. 3rd, Baker's force, thirty-six hundred strong, encamped two miles from Trinkitat. The night passed off quietly, and before daybreak on Monday morning, at half-past 7, three hundred baggage camels were laden and ready to move forward. The guns moved in advance of the column, the infantry following them, and the greater part of the cavalry were scattered round in a circle of skirmishers, a half mile or so from the column, thus effectively protecting it from any sudden attack. The Turkish cavalry were in reserve. "Shortly after 8 o'clock," says the special correspondent of the *London Standard*, "parties of the enemy were sighted. These retired slowly upon the approach of cavalry skirmishers, but showed more and more thickly as we advanced. At half-past 8 the column halted. A Krupp gun was brought forward and unlimbered, and a few rounds of shell were fired. It was hardly to be expected that any execution would be done upon the scattered parties of the enemy, but the effect was to cause them again to fall back. About 9 o'clock the enemy again approached, this time in considerable numbers. The guns of the attacking party opened fire, and the force was ordered to advance. When the cavalry skirmishers came up with the enemy they were soon hotly engaged. Presently about a dozen Arabs riding barebacked on wiry little horses, appeared from behind a hillock and coolly galloped across our right flank within three hundred yards of our cavalry on that side, running the gauntlet of the latter's fire. They passed scatheless, and as they still kept along parallel, to our column with the evident intention of gauging its strength and disposition, the general ordered the Turkish cavalry to

CHARGE THEM AND CUT THEM OFF.

After a hot chase the enemy escaped, but as the Turks rode back again toward the column they again appeared, and this time galloped across our front and around to our left. While our attention was distracted from the front by this incident, a sudden commotion arose in the midst of our cavalry skirmishers on our left flank. The enemy must for some time have been lying concealed close to them, and they now sprang to their feet, and with wild cries charged the Egyptian horsemen. These at once turned rein and came galloping in a wild and disorderly fashion. The order was then given for the infantry to form square—a manoeuvre in which they had been daily drilled for weeks. At this crisis, however, the but half-disciplined mass failed to accomplish it. Three sides were formed after a fashion, but on the fourth side two companies of the Alexandria regiment, seeing the enemy coming on leaping and brandishing their spears, stood like a panic-stricken flock of sheep, and nothing could get them to move into their place. Into the gap thus left in the square the enemy hotly poured, and at once all became panic and confusion. The troops fired, indeed, but for the most part straight into the air. The miserable Egyptian soldiers refused even to defend themselves, but, throwing away their rifles, flung themselves on the ground and grovelled there.

SCREAMING FOR MERCY.

No mercy was given, the Arab spearmen pouncing upon them and driving their spears through their necks and bodies. Nothing could well surpass the wild confusion which the mass presented—camels and guns mixed up together, soldiers firing in the air, with wild Arabs, their long hair streaming behind them, darting among them hacking and thrusting with their spears. The right side of the square was not at first assailed, but kept up a continuous fire toward their front, which killed many of our cavalry.

"When the charge had been made by the enemy on the left flank Gen. Baker, with his staff, were out with the cavalry in front. Upon riding back they found that the enemy had already got between them and the column. They at once charged them and cut their way through, but not without several being killed, among them Abdul Rusac, the chief Egyptian staff officer. His horse was hamstringed, and as it fell he was instantly speared by the Arabs. On nearing the square the general had to run the gauntlet of the fire of the Egyptians in his front, who, regardless of what was going on around them, were blazing away in their front. When the general reached the square the enemy had already broken it up, and it was clear that all was lost. Gen. Sartorius, with his staff, had been in the inside of the square when the enemy burst into it. They in vain tried to rally the panic-stricken Egyptians, and were so cooped in by the huddled mass of soldiers that, for a time, they were unable to extricate themselves. When, at last, the Arab throng of spearmen had thinned the throng of Egyptians, they succeeded in breaking out and in cutting their way through the enemy.

IT NOW BECAME A TOTAL ROUT.

The shattered column streaming across the plain toward Trinkitat, preceded by the flying cavalry, the enemy pressing hotly on the rear of the infantry and slaughtering at will, all mounted men unable to ride well were dismounted by the rush of the flying horsemen and killed. When last seen, Dr. Leslie, Morice Bey, and Capt. Walker, with drawn swords and pistols, were standing in a group surrounded by the enemy, close to the guns in the front face of the square. There also the Turkish battalion and thirty-six Italian policemen were annihilated, scarcely one escaping. So for five miles the flight and pursuit were kept up. The Massowah black battalion behaved well, and for a portion of the distance retired steadily, firing volleys into the enemy. Zohbar's blacks were undrilled and hardly able to fire their rifles, not having arrived long enough before the advance to enable the officers to get them into any shape. They therefore bolted as promptly as did the Egyptians. When the earthwork was reached, where we had encamped the night before, the general made great efforts to protect the rear of the flying fugitives by a charge of the Turkish cavalry with a few Egyptian horsemen, whose flight had been stopped by the officers, but nothing could induce them to charge. Half a regiment of Indian cavalry would have swept the plain of the scattered

enemy with the greatest ease. However, although the general could not induce the Turks to charge, he got them to form in line at the earthwork and to halt facing the enemy. The pursuit then ceased, the enemy, doubtless, being afraid of the ships; but, in fact, no gunboat was in the harbor, the admiral having ordered away the Decoy on the previous day. When the pursuit ceased the weary fugitives, horse and foot, with many riderless horses here and there among them, made their way across the two intervening miles of deep mud to Trinkitat. On reaching the shore they would have crowded into the few boats there and swamped them had not the English officers, revolver in hand, kept them back. Then they stood huddled together on the beach like a flock of sheep, and had the enemy come on the whole would have been butchered as easily and with as little resistance as so many sheep might have been. Gradually, as it was found that the enemy had really ceased in their pursuit, the panic subsided."

WITTICISMS.

A good fit—A fit of laughter.
The man who lives too fast is bound to die too quick.

The most appropriate pastry for a free lunch counter—sponge cake.
"I'm locked in slumber," murmurs the prison bird in his sleep.

The first man who says that March will come in like a lion must be lambled.

The oleomargarine manufacturers constitute an oligarchy.

The man who "wouldn't wonder" must be the laziest man in the world.

The didn't-know-it-was-loaded man will always live, and frequently die.

Artificial cork has been invented, and we shall soon hear of adulterated life-preservers.

The American hog is expected to breed disturbance between this country and Germany.

Every fresh trick the professional roller skater adds to his or her repertoire is called a new rinkle.

Every cloud has a silver lining; but if it is not so with solid silver water pitchers they are nickle plated.

"This is my coat of arms," said a tramp, tapping the ragged garment the deacon of a church had just given him.

He—"You made a fool of me when I married you, madam." She—"Lor! You always told me you were a self-made man!"

When a bachelor says he is single from choice it makes him mad to ask him why the girls made choice of some other fellow.

It ain't allus de silent man dat's de smartes'. De sheep doan make ez much fuss ez de dog, but he ain't got as much sense.

A Connecticut newspaper has put the enterprise of its contemporaries to shame by a long article on "The Next World's Fair."

The only thing that equals the spontaneity with which the country proposes a monument is the unanimous cordiality with which it isn't built.

A New York Alderman, being told recently that he was ambiguous, declared that the charge was false, as he had not drank anything for a year.

Under the head of "Injustice to Ireland," the *Detroit Free Press* announces the marriage of Oscar Wilde to a Dublin girl.

"Why don't you favor Mr. Archer, my child?" "Oh, for the best of reasons, ma. One can't expect to make much of a hit in society with an old-fashioned cross-beam!"

The critics are poking fun at a magazine article for saying, "man is our brother." Of course he is. You wouldn't call him your sister, would you? If the article said: "Man is our sister," the critics would have reason for kicking.

A young Hungarian woman, recently arrived at New York, has been trying to marry three men. Some wicked American has evidently been giving that poor girl some exaggerated pointers on the leap year of her adopted country.

A writer in a scientific monthly asks: "What is a meter?" In reply a jocular editor said: "An opinion has long prevailed that a meter is a contrivance that works twenty-seven hours a day, eight days a week the year around; and when you resolve to economize in the use of gas, it throws in a couple of extra hours daily without charge."

"Oranges should never be eaten in company," says an authority. We have noticed the disadvantage of eating oranges, too, and have come to the conclusion that the only way to really enjoy an orange is to retire to some sheltered spot in the grove, seize the orange and go in swimming in it.

Need of Economy.

One of the hardest lessons in life for young people to learn is to practice economy. It is a harder duty for a young man to accumulate and save his first \$1,000 than his next \$10,000. A man can be economical without being mean, and it is one of his most solemn duties to lay up sufficient in his days of strength and prosperity to provide for himself and those who are or may be dependent upon him in days of sickness or misfortune. Extravagance is one of the greatest evils of the present age. It is undermining and overturning the loftiest and best principles that should be retained and held sacred in society. It is annually sending thousands of young men and young women to ruin and misfortune.

Cultivate, then, sober and industrious habits; acquire the art of putting a little aside every day and for your future necessities; avoid all unnecessary and foolish expenditures. Spend your time in such a manner as shall bring you profit and enjoyment, and your money for such things as you actually need for your comfort and happiness, and you will prosper in your lives, your business, and will win and retain the respect and honor of all worthy and substantial people.

The family man resembles an oyster on the half-shell. The shell is known at home, the soft side abroad. Some men carry this resemblance in their faces. A great many men have countenances like oysters.