

stitute departed for my dear home, while I remained in her place.

As I pondered for the first time over my great isolation, in a place where everybody was a stranger to me, and did not even understand my speech, at once all thought of the great man, the violin-virtuoso, the first eminence, the P. C., the heroic lover, disappeared from within me; I leaned my head against the wall, and would have wept could I have done so.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ATHEIST AND THE HYPOCRITE

LET us leave for a while the journal of the student child, and examine the circumstances of the family circle, whose history we are relating.

There was living at Lankadomb an old heretic Samuel Topándy by name, who was related equally to the Bálnokházy and Áronffy families; notwithstanding this, the latter would never visit him on account of his conspicuously bad habits. His surroundings were of the most unfortunate description, and in distant parts it was told of him that he was an atheist of the most pronounced type.

But do not let any one think that the more modern freedom of thought had perhaps made Topándy cling to things long past, or that out of mental rationalism he had attempted, as a philosopher, to place his mind far beyond the visible tenets of religion. He was an atheist merely for his own amusement, that, by his denial of God, he might annoy those people—priests and the powers that be—with whom he came in contact.

For to annoy, and successfully annoy, has always been held as an amusement among frail humanity. And what can more successfully annoy than the ridiculing of that which a man worships?

The County Court had just put in a judicial "deed of execution," and had sent a magistrate, and a lawyer, supported by a posse of twelve armed gendarmes, for the purpose of putting an end, once for all, to those scandals, by which Topándy had for years been arousing the indignation of the souls of the faithful, causing them to send complaint after complaint in to the court.

Topányi offered cigars to the official "bailiffs." The magistrate, Michael Daruszegi, a young man of thirty, appeared to be still younger from his fair face. They had sent the under, not the chief magistrate, because he was a new hand, and would be more zealous. There is more firmness in a young man, and firmness was necessary when face to face with the disbeliever in God.

"We did not come here to smoke, sir," was the dry reply of the young officer. "We are on official business."

"The devil take official business. Don't 'sir' me, my dear fellow, but come, let us drink a 'chartreuse,' and then tell your business, in company with the lawyer, to my steward. If money is required, break open the granaries, take as much wheat as will settle your claims, then dine with me; there will be some more good fellows, who are coming for a little music. And to-morrow morning we can make out the report and enter it in the protocol."

As he said this he kept continuous hold on the "bailiff's" wrist, and led him inward into the inner room: and as he was far stronger by nature than the latter, it practically amounted to the leader of the attacking force being taken prisoner.

"I protest! I forbid every kind of confidence! This is serious business!"

In vain did the magistrate protest against his enforced march.

Soon the second part of the "legale testimonium;" Mr. Francis Butzkay, the lawyer came to his aid with his stumpy, short-limbed figure; he had gazed for a time in passive inactivity at the fruitless struggle of his principal with the "in causam vocatus."

"I hope the gentleman will not give cause for the use of force; for we shall fether him hand and foot in such a manner that no better safeguard will be necessary." So saying, our friend the lawyer smiled complaisantly, all over his round face, looking, with his

long moustache, for all the world like the moon, when a long cloud is crossing its surface.

"Fetters indeed!" Topányi guffawed, "I should just like to see you! I beg you, pray put those fetters on me, merely for the sake of novelty, that I may be able to say: I also have had chains on me: at any rate on one of my legs, or one of my arms. It would be a damned fine amusement."

"Sir," exclaimed the magistrate, freeing his hand. "You must learn to respect in us the 'powers that be.' We are your judges, sent by the County Court, entrusted with the task of putting an end to those scandals caused by you, which have filled every Christian soul with righteous indignation."

Topányi raised his eyes in astonishment at the envoys of the "powers that be."

"Oho, so it is not a case of a 'deed of execution?'"

"By no means. It is a far more important matter that is at stake. The Court considers the atheistical irreligious 'attentats' have gone too far and therefore has sent us—"

"—To preach me a sermon? No, sir magistrate, now you must really bring those irons, and put me in chains, and bind me, for unbound I will not listen to your sermon. Hold me down if you wish to preach words of devotion to me, for otherwise I shall bite, like a wild animal."

The magistrate retreated, in spite of his youthful daring; but the lawyer only smiled gently and did not even take his hands from behind his back.

"Really, sir, you must not get mad, or we shall have to take you to the Rókus hospital,\* and put the strait-jacket on you."

"The devil blight you!" roared Topányi, making for the two judges, and then retiring before the undisturbed smiling countenance of the lawyer. "Well, and what complaint has the Court to make of me?"

\* A hospital in Pest.

Have I stolen anything from anybody? Have I committed incendiarism? Have I committed a murder, that they come down so hard upon me?"

The magistrate was a ready speaker: immediately he answered with:

"Certainly, you have committed a theft: you have stolen the welfare of others' souls. Certainly you are an incendiary: you have set fire to the peace of faithful souls. Certainly you are a murderer: you have murdered the souls entrusted to you!"

Topányi, seeing there was no escape, turned entreatingly to the gendarmes who accompanied the magistrate.

"Boys, cherubims without wings, two of you come here and seize me, that I may not run away."

They obeyed him and laid hands on him.

"Well, my dear magistrate, fire away."

The worthy magistrate was annoyed, that this sorry business could not in any way assume a serious aspect.

"In the first place I come to see the execution of that judgment which the honorable Court has passed upon you."

"I bow my head,"—growled Topányi in a tone of derisive subservience.

"You have in your household youths and young girls growing up in various branches of service, who, born here, have never yet been baptized, thanks to your sinful neglect."

"Excuse me, the general drying up of wells . . ."

"Don't interrupt me," bawled the magistrate. "You should have produced your defence then and there, when and where you were accused; but as you did not appear at the appointed time, and obstinately procrastinated, you must listen to the sentence. All those boys and girls brought up within your premises must be taken into the country town and baptized according to the ordinances of religion."

"Could not the matter be finished here at once by the spring?"

The magistrate was beside himself with anger. But the good lawyer only smiled and said:

"Pray, sir, show a little common sense. The County Court compels none, against his will, to be a Christian: still one must belong to some religion. So if your lordship will not take the trouble to go with his household to the 'pater,' well, we shall take him to the rabbi: that will do just as well."

Topányi laughingly shook a menacing fist at the lawyer.

"You're a great gibbet! You always manage me. Well, let us rather go to the 'pater' than to the rabbi; but at least let my servants keep their old names."

"That is also inadmissible," answered the magistrate severely. "You have given your servants names, of a kind not usually borne by men. One is called Pirók,\* another Czinke;† the name of one little girl—God save the mark—is Beelzebub! Who would register such names as these? They will all receive respectable names to be found in the Christian calendar; and any one, who dares to call them by the names they have hitherto borne shall pay as great a fine as if he had purposely calumniated a fellow-man. How many are there whom you have kept back in this manner from the water of Christianity?"

"Four butlers, three maid-servants and two parrots."

"Perjurer! Your every word is spittle in the face of the true believers."

"Oh, gag me. I beg you to save me from perjury."

"Kindly call the people in question."

Topányi turned round and called to his butler who stood behind him:

"Produce Pirók, Estergályos,‡ Seprünyél,§ then

\* Chaffinch.

† Titmouse, names of birds given as pet names to these servants.

‡ Turner.

§ Broom.

Kakukfü,\* and Macskaláb;† comfort them with the news that they are going to enter Heaven, and will receive a fur-coat, a pair of boots, and a good gourd, from which the wine will never fail: all the gift of the honorable County Court."

"For my part," said the young representative of the law, standing on tip-toe, "I must ask you seriously to answer, with the moderation due to our presence, have you hidden any one?"

"Whether I have stolen away someone on hell's account? No, my dear fellow, I don't court Satan's acquaintance either: let him catch men for himself, if he can."

"I have a mandatum for your examination on oath."

"Keep your mandatum in your pocket, and measure out thirty florins' worth of oats from my granary: that's the fine. For I don't intend to be examined on oath."

"Indeed?"

"Of course. If you bid me, I will swear: I'm a rare hand at it; I can swear for half an hour at a stretch without repeating myself."

Again the smiling lawyer intervened:

"Give us your word of honor, then, that besides those produced, there is no servant in your household who has not yet been baptized."

"Well, I give you my word of honor that there is not 'in my household' even a living creature who is a pagan."

Topándy's word of honor only just escaped being broken for that gypsy-girl, whom he had bought in her sixth year from encamping gypsies for two dollars and a sucking pig, now, ten years later, did not belong any more to the household, but presided at table when gentlefolk came to dinner. But she still bore that heathen name, which she had received in the reedy thicket. She was still called Czipra.

\* Thyme.

† Catsfoot.

And the godless fellow had snatched her away from the water of Christianity.

"Has the honorable Court any other complaint to make against me?"

"Yes, indeed. Not merely do you force your household to be pagan, but you are accused of disturbing in their religious services others who make no secret of their devout feelings."

"For example?"

"Just opposite you is the courtyard of Mr. Nepomuk John Sárköly,\* who is a very righteous man."

"As far as I know, quite the opposite: he is always praying, a fact which proves that his sins must be very numerous."

"It is not your business to judge him. In our common world it is a merit, if someone dares to display to the public eye the fact that he still respects religion, and it is the duty of the law to protect him."

"Well, and how have I scandalized the good fellow?"

"Not long ago Mr. Sárköly had a large Saint Nepomuk painted on the façade of his house, in oils on a sheet of bronze, and before the chief figure he was himself painted, in a kneeling position."

"I know: I saw it."

"From the lips of St. Nepomuk was flowing down in 'lapidarig' letters to the kneeling figure the following Latin saying: 'Mi fili, ego te nunquam deseram.'"

"I read the words."

"An iron grating was placed before the picture, and covered the whole niche, that infamous hands might not be able to touch it."

"A very wise idea."

"One morning following a very stormy night, to the astonishment of all, the Latin inscription had disappeared from the picture, and in its place there stood: 'Soon thou wilt pass from before me, thou old hypocrite!'"

\* Mud-valley.

"I can't help it, if the person in question changed his views."

"Why, certainly you can help it. The painter who prepared that picture, upon being cross-questioned, confessed and publicly affirmed that, in consideration of a certain sum of money paid by you, he had painted the latter inscription in oils, and over it, in water-colours, the former: so that the first shower washed off the upper surface from the picture, making the honest, zealous fellow an object of ridicule and contempt in his own house. Do you believe, sir, that such practical jokes are not punished by the hand of justice?"

"I am not in the habit of believing much."

"Among other things, however, you are bound to believe that justice will condemn you, first to pay a fine for blackmail; secondly, to pay for the repairs your tricks have made necessary."

"I don't see an atom of plaintiff's counsel here."

"Because plaintiff left the amount due him to the pleasure of the Court, to be devoted to charitable purposes."

"Good: then please break into the granaries."

"That we shall not do," interrupted the lawyer: "later on we shall take it out of the 'regalia.'"

Topándy laughed.

"My dear, good magistrate. Do you believe all that is in the Bible?"

"I am a true Christian."

"Then I appeal to your faith. In one place it stands that some invisible hand wrote, in the room of some pagan king—Belshazzar, if the story be true,— the following words, 'Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.' If that hand could write then, why could it not now have written that second saying? And if it was the rain that washed away the righteous fellow's words, you must accuse the rain, for the fault lies there."

"These are indeed very weighty counter-charges: and you might have declared them all before the Court, to which you were summoned: you might have appealed even to the septemvirate, but as you did not ap-

pear then, you must bear the consequences of your obstinacy."

"Good; I shall pay the price," said Topándy laughing:—"But it was a good joke on my part after all, wasn't it?"

The magistrate showed an angry countenance.

"There will be other good jokes, too. Kindly wait until the end."

"Is the list of crimes still longer?"

"A severe enquiry into the sources would never find an end. The gravest charge against you is the profanation of holy places."

"I profane some holy place? Why, for twenty years I have not been in the precincts even of a church steeple."

"You desecrated a place used long ago for holy ceremonies by riotous revels."

"Oh, you mean that, do you? Let us make distinctions, if you please. Great is the difference between place and place. Do you mean the convent of the Red Brothers? That is no church. The late Emperor Joseph drove them out, and their property was put up to auction by the State, together with all the buildings situate thereon. Thus it was that I came into possession of the convent garden: I was there at the auction; I bid and it was knocked down to me. There were buildings on it, but whether any kind of church had been there I do not know, for they took away all the movables, and I found only bare walls. No kind of 'servitus' (engagement), as to what I would use the building for, had been included in the agreement of purchase. In this matter I know of others who were no more scrupulous. I know of a convent at Maria-Eich,\* where in place of the ancient altar stands the peasant-chimney, and here the Swabian, into whose hands this honorable antiquity passed, keeps his maize; why, in a town beside the Danube may be seen

\* A place in Austria where sacred relics exist.

what was once a convent, the 'aerarium' of which has been turned into a hospital."

"Examples cannot help you. If the Swabian peasant keeps 'the blessing of God' in that place, from which they had once prayed for it, that is not profanity: the 'aerarium' too is pursuing an office of righteousness, in nursing bodily sufferings in the place where once mental sufferings gained comfort; but you have had disgusting pictures painted all over the walls that have come into your possession."

"I beg your pardon, the subjects are all chosen from classical literature: illustrations to the poems of Beranger and Lafontaine—'Mon Curé,' 'Les Clefs Du Paradis,' 'Les Capulier,' 'Les Cordeliers Du Catalogue,' etc. Every subject a pious one."

"I know: I am acquainted with the originals of them. You may cover the walls of your own rooms with them, if you please: but I have brought four stone-workers with me, who, according to the judgment of the Court, are to erase all those pictures."

"Genuine iconoclasm!" guffawed Topandy, who found great amusement in arousing a whole county against him by his caprices. Iconoclasts! Picture-destroyers!"

"There is something else we are going to destroy!" continued the magistrate. "In that place there was a crypt. What has become of it?"

"It is a crypt still."

"What is in it?"

"What is usually in a crypt: dead men of hallowed memory, who are lying in wooden coffins and waiting for the great awakening."

The magistrate made a face of doubt. He did not know whether to believe or not.

"And when you and your revelling companions hold your Bacchanalia there?"

"I object to the word 'Bacchanalia.'"

"True, it is still more. I should have used a stronger expression for that riot, when in scandalous undress, carrying in front a steak on a spit, the whole company

sings low songs such as 'Megálljon Kend'\* and 'Hetes, nyloczas,'† and in this guise makes scandalous processions from castle to cloister."

"The authorities must indeed be greatly embittered against me, if they see anything scandalous in the fact that a body of good-humored men undress to the skin, when they are warm. As far as the so-called low songs are concerned, they have such innocent words, they might be printed in a book, while the melodies are very pious."

"The scandal is just that, that you parody pious songs, setting them to trivial words. Tell me what is the good of singing the eight cards of the pack‡ as a hymn. And if you are in a good humor, why do you go with it to the crypt?"

"You know we go there for a little mumony feast."

"Yes, for a little 'Mumon,'" interrupted the lawyer.

"That's just what I meant," said the atheist, laughing.

"What?" roared the magistrate, who now began to understand the enigma of the dead lying in their wooden coffins: "perhaps that is a cellar?"

"Of course: I never had a better cellar than that."

"And the dead, and the coffins?"

"Twenty-five round coffins, full of wine. Come, my dear sir, taste them all. I assure you you won't regret it."

The magistrate was now really in a fury: fury made a lion of him, so that he was quite capable of tearing his wrists by sheer force out of the imprisoning hands.

"An end to all familiarity! You stand before the

\* "Stop (you)," "Kend" being the pleasant abbreviation for "Kegyed," one method of addressing (literally "your grace"), corresponding to our "you."

† "Seven and eight," referring to the number on the playing cards: the Austrian National Hymn is sung by great patriots to these words: the "king" and "ace" being the highest two cards, come together; and this is in Magyar király (king), diszno (ace); is also "swein."

‡ In Magyar cards the pack begins with the 7.

authority of the law, with whom you cannot trifle. Give me the keys of the cloister, that I may clean the profaned place."

"Please break open the door."

"Would you not be sorry to ruin a patent lock?" suggested the lawyer.

"Well, promise me that you will taste at least 'one' brand: then I will open the door, for I don't intend to open any door under the title of 'cloister,' but any number under the title of 'cellar,' and in that case I shall pay in ready money."

The worthy lawyer tugged at the magistrate's sleeve; prudence yielded, and there are bounds to severity, too.

"Very well, the lawyer will taste the wine, but I am no drinker."

Topándy whispered some words in his butler's ears, whereupon that worthy suddenly disappeared.

"So you see, my dear fellow, we are agreed at last: now I should like to see the account of how much I owe to the county for my slight upon the Brotherhood."

"Here is the calculation: two hundred florins with costs, which amount to three florins, thirty kreuzer."

(This happened thirty years ago.)

"Further?"

"Further; the repair of the damage caused by you, the expenses of the present expedition, the daily pay and sustenance of the stone-masons aforesaid: making in all a sum total of two hundred and forty-three florins, forty kreuzers."

"A large sum, but I shall produce it from somewhere."

With the words Topándy drew out from his chest a drawer, and carrying it bodily as it was, put it down on the great walnut table, before the authorities of the law.

"Here it is!"

The interesting members of the law first drew back in alarm, and then commenced to roar with laughter. That drawer was filled with—I cannot express it in one word—but generally speaking—with paper.

A great variety of aged bank notes, some before the depreciation of value, others of a late date, still in currency: long bank-notes, black bank-notes, red spotted bank-notes; then, old cards: Hungarian, Swiss, French; old theatre-tickets, market pictures, the well-known product of street-humor; the tailor riding on a goat, the devil taking off bad women, a portrait of the long-moustached mayor of Nuremberg: a pile of envelopes, all heaped together in a huddle.

That was Topándy's savings bank.

He would always spend silver and gold money, but money paid to him in bank-notes, which he had to accept, he would put by year by year among this collection of cards, funny pictures, and theatrical programmes; this heap of value was never disturbed except when, as at present, some enforced visit had to be put up with, some so-called "execution."

"Please, help yourselves."

"What?" cried the magistrate. "Must we pick out the value from the non-value in this rubbish?"

"Now I am not so well-informed an expert as to distinguish what is recalled from what is still in circulation. Still my good friend is right, it is my duty to count out, yours to receive."

Then he plunged his hand into the treasure-heap, and counted over the bits of paper.

"This is good, this is not. This is still new, this is surely torn. Here's a five florin, here a ten florin note. This is the Knave of Hearts."

A little discussion occurred when he counted a label that had been removed from an old champagne bottle, as a ten florin note.

The gentlemen took exception to that: it must be thrown away.

"What, is this not money? It must be money. It is a French bank-note. There is written on it ten florins. Cliquot will pay if you take it to him."

Then he began to explain several comical pictures, and bargained with the authorities—how much would they give for them? he had paid a big price for them.

Finally the worthy lawyer had again to intervene: otherwise this liquidation might have lasted till the following evening; then, after a strict search in a critical manner, he withdrew two hundred and forty-three florins from the pile.

"A little water if you please, I should like to wash my hands," said the lawyer after his work, feeling like one who has separated the raw wheat from the tares.

"Like Pilate after passing judgment," jested Topányi. "You shall have all you want at once. Already there is an end to the legal manipulation: we are no longer 'legale testimonium' and 'incattus,' but guest and host."

"God forbid," repudiated the magistrate retiring towards the door. "We did not come in that guise. We do not wish to trouble you any longer."

"Trouble indeed!" said the accused, guffawing. "What, do you think this matter has been any trouble to me?—on the contrary, the most exquisite amusement! This annoyance of the county against me I would not sell for a thousand florins. It was glorious. 'Execution!' Legally erased pictures! An investigation into my private behavior! I shall live for a year on this joke. And you will see, my friends, I shall do so again soon. I shall find out some plan for getting them to take me in irons to the Court: a battalion of soldiers shall come for me, and they shall make me the son of the warden! Ha! ha! May I be damned if I don't succeed in my project! If they would but put me in prison for a year, and make me saw wood in the courtyard of the County Court, and clean the boots of the Lieutenant Governor. That is a capital idea! I shall not die until I reach that."

In the meantime a butler arrived with the water, while a second opened another door and invited the guests with much ceremony to partake in the pleasure of the table.

"Her ladyship invites the honorable gentlemen's company at déjeuner."

The magistrate looked in perplexity at the lawyer,

who turned to the basin and hid his laughing face in his hands.

"You are married?" the magistrate enquired of Topányi.

"Oh dear no," he answered, "she is not my wife, but my sister."

"But we are invited to dinner in the neighborhood."

"By Mr. Sárkölyi? That does not matter. If a man wishes to dine at Sárkölyi's, he will be wise to have déjeuner first. Besides I have your word to drink a glass as a 'conditio sine qua non;' besides a chivalrous man cannot refuse the invitation of a lady."

The last pretext was conclusive; it was impossible to refuse a lady's invitation, even if a man has armed force at his command. He is obliged to yield to the superior power.

The magistrate allowed the third attempt to succeed, and was dragged by the arm into the dining-room.

Topányi audibly bade the butlers look after the wants of the gendarmes and stone-masons, and give them enough to eat and drink: and, when our friend, the magistrate, prepared to object, interrupted him with: "Kindly remember the 'execution' is over, and consider that those good fellows are tearing off plaster from the cloister walls, and the paint-dust will go to their lungs: and it shall not be my fault if any harm touches the upholders of public security. This way, if you please: here comes my sister."

Through the opposite door came the above mentioned "ladyship."

She could not have been taken for more than fifteen years old: she was wearing a pure white dress, trimmed with lace, according to the fashion of the time, and bound round her slender waist with a broad rose-colored riband; her complexion was brunette, and pale, in contrast to her ruddy round lips, which allowed to flash between their velvet surfaces the most lovely pearly set of teeth imaginable: her two thick eyebrows almost met on her brow, and below her long